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PANAMA INVASION: 30TH ANNIVERSARY

US offensive led to literal witch hunt

By WILLIAM BRANIGAN
The Washington Post

The house had been used by Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega, deposed days before as Panama's notorious strongman. The stench was overpowering as items were examined in the upstairs room on that December day 30 years ago.

The source soon became apparent. Wrapped in a red cloth was a rotting cow's tongue embedded in a bowl of white cornmeal amid eight spoiled eggs, the whole thing crawling with insects. The tongue was folded in half and nailed shut with two dozen large nails.

James Dibble, a special agent with the U.S. Army's Criminal Investigation Command, pried out the nails and unfolded the tongue. Inside it, a name appeared to be written in ink. The writing was illegible, but judging by other items found in the house inside Panama City's Fort Amador, the concoction was aimed at casting a spell on a Noriega enemy in a voodoo-like ritual.

So began a strange foray into the dark world of the dictator who had ruled Panama with increasing ruthlessness for the past six years — at least part of that time with the help of a woman identified by the Army as a Brazilian witch, a sorceress skilled in the black magic and occult rituals that Noriega practiced.

Three decades ago, 24,000 U.S. troops invaded Panama, driving Noriega from power and handing

SEE PANAMA ON PAGE 6



The invasion deposed dictator Manuel Noriega, nicknamed "Pineapple Face" for his acne-scarred complexion.



PHOTOS BY CHAD GARLAND/Stars and Stripes

Sgt. Brittany Rockwell carries a case of Rip It's off a CH-47 Chinook helicopter during a special holiday mission to spread cheer to troops deployed to austere camps in Syria's Deir el-Zour province on Monday.

'A cornucopia of goodwill'

Troops in Syria get stockings stuffed with goodies delivered by helicopter

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

DEIR EL-ZOUR PROVINCE, Syria — Donning Santa hats and riding in Chinooks instead of sleighs, a combined military mission delivered holiday cheer to U.S. troops at several austere camps on what one general called the "outside edge" of America's military presence in eastern Syria on Monday.

Several high-ranking officers and NCOs in the U.S.-led coalition to defeat Islamic State brought gifts and goodies, as well as surprise recorded video messages from home, for men and women deployed to Deir el-Zour and Hassakeh provinces, where last month U.S. troops resumed large-scale operations with Kurdish-led partner forces against ISIS



Sgt. Teaghen Goida, left, and Capt. Chelsea Stalter pose for a photo during a Christmas celebration at the remote base where they are deployed in Syria.

after a brief pause earlier this year.

The helicopter rotors might have kicked up a little too much dust, as some of the service members watching the videos appeared to get watery eyes during the brief celebrations.

One of the first to view a message from home, a bearded man whom Pentagon officials asked not be photographed or named, quickly flipped his sunglasses down over his eyes as the message from his young children ended.

"Eyeball sweat," someone teased from the crowd of a few dozen troops, who applauded and said "aww" behind him.

The videos were part of what unclassified labels on boxes of stockings called Operation Holiday Express, though an official asked

SEE GOODWILL ON PAGE 3

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Fed may be masking efforts to calm repo market

Bloomberg

Wall Street sleuths are wondering whether the Federal Reserve is quietly doing more to calm the U.S. repo market than just the headline-grabbing liquidity injections that have captivated observers for months.

The New York Fed runs something called the foreign reverse repo pool, a place where other nations' central banks can park cash. The amount outstanding has shrunk by 18% since peaking at \$306 billion in mid-September.

A reduction fits with the Fed's goal of building up reserves in the banking system to keep the repo market orderly following the tumult of three months ago. Wrightson ICAAP's Lou Crandall and Bank of America strategist Mark Cabana suspect the Fed might be intentionally driving institutions away from the RRP program.

"It smells to me that it's a little more Fed-driven," Cabana said in a phone interview.

When foreign central banks tap the foreign reverse repo pool,

it sucks reserves out of the system, working against the central bank's efforts to replenish the supply. One of the reasons why repo went haywire three months ago is that reserves, or banks' excess cash parked at the Fed, got too scarce.

In the past year, Crandall and Credit Suisse analyst Zoltan Pozsar have advocated for the Fed to cap the interest rate on the foreign RRP as a way of deterring institutions from parking cash at the Fed and draining reserves.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (Dec. 26)	\$1.1366
Dollar buys (Dec. 26)	80.8788
British pound (Dec. 26)	\$1.133
Japanese yen (Dec. 26)	107.00
South Korean won (Dec. 26)	1,135.80
Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770
British pound	\$1.2555
Canada (Dollar)	1.3163
China (Yuan)	7.0078
Denmark (Krone)	6.7422
Egypt (Pound)	16.0791
Euro (Euro)	\$1.0810/0.9024
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7875
India (Rupee)	299.63
Israel (Shekel)	3.4745
Japan (Yen)	109.41
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3035
Norway (Krone)	8.9340
Philippines (Peso)	50.92
Poland (Zloty)	3.84
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7523
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3552
South Korea (Won)	1,163.88

Switzerland (Franc)	0.9813
Thailand (Baht)	30.15
Turkey (New Lira)	5.9503

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-euro, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	4.75
Discount rate	2.25
Federal funds market rate	1.55
3-month bill	1.56
30-year bond	2.34

WEATHER OUTLOOK



The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

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WAR ON TERRORISM

Goodwill: Tour brings 'creature comforts' to troops at remote bases

FROM FRONT PAGE

that one of the destinations handwritten on the box not be photographed due to its sensitive nature. At some sites, which officials said had not before been visited by media, they asked that identifying features not be photographed, and at one site, Stars and Stripes was not allowed to take photos at all — though it was too dark anyway.

At several sites, a loose formation of soldiers, some bearded and anonymous, others clean-shaven and bearing unit combat patches, awaited the arrival of their visitors, who included Lt. Gen. Pat White, commander of the U.S.-led coalition, and his staff — several of them wearing Santa hats.

"Just a little bit of merriment today, then you've got to get back to work," White told one of the groups after thanking them for all that they do. "All right, get back to work. No, just kidding. God bless you guys."

The troops throughout Syria are a mix of conventional forces who serve on tower guard duty and conduct presence patrols, for example, while special operations units train, advise and assist their local partners — "and occasionally ... combat-enable a strike or raid" — said Col. Myles Caggins, a spokesman for Combined Joint Task Force — Operation Inherent Resolve.

At a couple of sites, Command Sgt. Maj. Daniel Hendrex, the senior noncommissioned officer for Inherent Resolve, grabbed razors from care package boxes brought along on the visit and handed them out to long-whiskered special operations troops, joking that he'd be a bad sergeant major if he didn't ask them to shave.

U.S. troops at these outposts get limited access to "creature comforts" of more built-up bases in the region, such as post exchanges, Caggins said.

The holiday tour was meant to bring them niceties they'd otherwise do without, made possible by "a cornucopia of goodwill" from the U.S., he said, including donations from the USO of Fort Hood, Texas; McLean Bible Church of Vienna, Va.; and a group called Montana Supporting Military.

"A little touch of home goes a long way toward morale," he added.

A brass quintet from the 1st Infantry Division band, flown into the region recently from Fort Riley, Kan., played holiday tunes, while stockings stuffed with donated snacks, hygiene gear and letters from children were distributed at each camp. Cookies were handed out, and hot chocolate was served.

"They knew I wanted snacks — I got snacks," Pvt. Rance Ramsey, who deployed as part of the 25th Infantry Division's 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, said upon inspecting his stocking.

Pfc. Damion Fortmeyer, of Independence, Mo., also with 3-21, was pulled off guard duty early to take part in the celebration and watch a video his family recorded for him.

Fortmeyer spends about eight hours a day on watch, he said. Other than the sounds of occasional gunfire and explosions, not much seems to happen, he said.

Fortmeyer and Ramsey were moved around a lot in recent months, they said, and postal deliveries haven't quite caught up to them yet. At each place, it seems like the mail arrives just after they've left, Ramsey said, so the stockings would tide them over to the next care package.

In October, President Donald Trump ordered American forces pulled back from near the border with Turkey ahead of that country's incursion into northern Syria. Some of those troops were pulled back into Iraq but are now returning to Syria, Caggins said.

U.S. partner forces had previously occu-



PHOTOS BY CHAD GARLAND/Stars and Stripes

A holiday treat for troops deployed to remote bases in Syria included soft drinks, energy drinks, cookies, hot cocoa and more on Dec. 23 at a base in Hassekeh province.



Left: Brig. Gen. Stephen Jost, center, chief of staff for the U.S.-led coalition to defeat Islamic State in Iraq and Syria carries a box of treats from a CH-47 Chinook in Syria's Deir el-Zour province. Above: Sgt. Brittany Rockwell carries a stuffed Grinch toy during a special holiday mission to spread cheer to troops.

pied all of the camps and desert outstations visited on Monday, but the Americans had moved into some of them only recently after shifting from northern and western parts of the country to "operating strictly in the eastern parts," Caggins said.

The Pentagon now plans to keep about 600 troops in Syria indefinitely, defense officials have said, though Caggins declined to discuss numbers. They're staying to guard the oil, Trump has said, though the Pentagon says they're there to ensure ISIS

is defeated to the point that local forces can contain the terrorist threat.

Cpl. Calvin Kenno is deployed to a site in the country's eastern Deir el-Zour province with a company from an attack helicopter battalion of 1st Cavalry Division's 1st Air Cavalry Brigade — his second Christmas away from home in three years.

The first, he was a newbly on a nine-month rotation to Europe, he said, and now he's missing a chance to make holiday memories with his two young children.

Kenno stood in front of a music stand holding a tablet computer that played a video of his family, with the audio played through a portable loudspeaker. Apache attack helicopters stood not far behind him, black smoke from an oil fire rising in the distance.

When his wife asked how many presents Santa would bring daddy, Kenno's son counted: "One, two, wee, fow, five."

As in all the messages, the family expressed pride, best wishes and sadness about their loved one's absence.

"That was a tear-jerker," Kenno said after the clip ended and a buddy clapped him on the back. Moments later, he added, "It just makes me happy!"

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'A little touch of home goes a long way toward morale.'

Command Sgt. Maj. Daniel Hendrex

MILITARY

Trump calls GIs ahead of Christmas, is coy on Kim

Associated Press

PALM BEACH, Fla. — President Donald Trump called members of all five branches of the military stationed across the world to share greetings ahead of the Christmas holiday.

Speaking Tuesday by video conference from his private club in Florida, where he is on vacation, Trump said, "I want to wish you an amazing Christmas." The group included Marines in Afghanistan, an Army unit in Kuwait, a Navy ship in the Gulf of Aden, an Air Force base in Missouri and a Coast Guard station in Alaska.

Trump praised the armed forces for their efforts this year to eliminate the last of Islamic State's territorial caliphate and for killing ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

"You make it possible for us to do what we have to do," Trump said, thanking them for their service.

Trump had just finished thanking the troops when he was asked



ANDREW HARNIK/AP

President Donald Trump listens during a Christmas Eve video teleconference with U.S. service members in Palm Beach, Fla.

about North Korea. He opted for a wait-and-see approach.

"Maybe it's a present where he sends me a beautiful vase as opposed to a missile test," Trump said. "I may get a nice present from him. You don't know. You

never know."

Nuclear talks between the U.S. and North Korea have been stalled since a February summit between Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un fell apart.

Putin: Russia leading in hypersonic weapons

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV
Associated Press

MOSCOW — President Vladimir Putin said Tuesday that Russia has got a strong edge in designing new weapons and that it has become the only country in the world to deploy hypersonic weapons.

Speaking at a meeting with top military brass, Putin said that for the first time in history Russia is now leading the world in developing an entire new class of weapons unlike in the past when it was catching up with the United States.

The Russian leader noted that during Cold War times, the Soviet Union was behind the United States in designing the atomic bomb and building strategic bombers and intercontinental ballistic missiles.

"Now we have a situation that is unique in modern history when they are trying to catch up to us," he said. "Not a single country has hypersonic weapons, let alone hypersonic weapons of intercontinental range."

The Pentagon and the U.S. military services have been working on the development of hypersonic weapons in recent years, and De-

fense Secretary Mark Esper said in August that he believes "it's probably a matter of a couple of years" before the U.S. has one. He has called it a priority as the military works to develop new long-range fire capabilities.

The U.S. also has repeatedly warned Congress about hypersonic missiles being developed by Russia and China that will be harder to track and defeat. U.S. officials have talked about putting a layer of sensors in space to more quickly detect enemy missiles, particularly the more advanced hypersonic threats.

The administration also plans to study the idea of basing interceptors in space, so the U.S. can strike incoming enemy missiles during the first minutes of flight when the booster engines are still burning.

Putin said that the first unit equipped with the Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle is set to go on duty this month, while the air-launched Kinzhal hypersonic missiles already have entered service. The Russian leader first mentioned the Avangard and the Kinzhal among other prospective weapons systems in his state-of-the-nation address in March 2018.

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THE NEW SANNO

MILITARY

DOD: NJ soldier killed in Afghanistan

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — A 33-year-old American soldier was killed in combat Monday in Afghanistan, the U.S. military said. The Taliban claimed they were behind a fatal roadside bombing in northern Kunduz province.

In a statement Monday night, the Pentagon identified the casualty as Sgt. 1st Class Michael J. Goble, of Washington Township, N.J. Goble was assigned to 1st Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne), Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.

Goble's unit was engaged in combat operations in Kunduz province, Afghanistan, when he suffered fatal injuries, the Pentagon said. No other details were provided.

Twenty U.S. deaths have been recorded in Afghanistan this year. There have also been three noncombat deaths in 2019. More than 2,400 Americans have died in the nearly 18-year conflict.

The Taliban stage near-daily attacks targeting Afghan and U.S. forces, as well as government officials — even as they hold peace talks with a U.S. envoy tasked with negotiating an end to what has become America's longest war. Scores of Afghan civilians are also killed in the crossfire or by roadside bombs planted by militants.

Last month, two U.S. service mem-

bers died in a helicopter crash in eastern Logar province. The Taliban claimed responsibility for that crash, saying they downed the helicopter, causing many fatalities. The U.S. military dismissed the claim as false.

Shortly after the initial U.S. military statement on the latest fatality, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid tweeted that the U.S. soldier was killed in the Chardara district in northern Kunduz province where U.S. and Afghan forces were carrying out a joint raid. Mujahid said the insurgents had planted a roadside bomb that killed the service member. He even tweeted a purported photo ID of the slain U.S. soldier, without saying how it was obtained.

The U.S. military did not comment on the tweet or the Taliban claim.

The Taliban have a strong presence in Kunduz province. The provincial capital, the city of Kunduz, briefly fell to the Taliban in 2015, before the insurgents withdrew in the face of a NATO-backed Afghan offensive. The city is a strategic crossroads with easy access to much of northern Afghanistan as well as the country's capital, Kabul, about 200 miles away.

In 2016, the Taliban pushed back into the city center, briefly raising their flag before gradually being driven out again. In August this year they launched another attempt to overrun the city but were repelled.

Washington's peace envoy, Zalmay

Khalilzad, has been trying to hammer out a peace agreement with the Taliban for more than a year. The U.S. wants the deal to include a promise from the Taliban that Afghanistan would not be used as a base by any terrorist group.

Earlier this month, Khalilzad met with Taliban representatives in Qatar, where the insurgents maintain a political office, as the talks between the two sides resumed after a three-month halt by President Donald Trump following a particularly deadly wave of Taliban attacks, including a Kabul suicide bombing that killed an American soldier.

The Qatar meeting focused on getting a Taliban promise to reduce violence, with a permanent cease-fire being the eventual goal.

Khalilzad is trying to lay the groundwork for negotiations between Afghans on both sides of the protracted conflict but the Taliban refuse to talk directly with the Kabul government.

Meanwhile, a bomb went off Monday morning at the funeral of a village elder in eastern Laghman province, killing at least three civilians and wounding seven, according to Asadullah Dawlatzai, the provincial governor's spokesman.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack but the spokesman blamed the Taliban.

Subs named after ships hit in Pearl Harbor raid

The Honolulu Star-Advertiser

Navy ships named the USS Arizona and the USS Oklahoma will return to active duty with the announcement Tuesday by acting Secretary of the Navy Thomas Modly that two new Virginia-class attack submarines will be named after American heroes of the greatest generation who perished on the famed Pearl Harbor battleships.

The move brings back into service the hallowed ship names 78 years after both were badly damaged in the surprise Japanese attack on Dec. 7, 1941. Most of the Navy casualties that day came from losses on those two ships.

"I am honored and humbled to name the next two Virginia-class nuclear fast-attack submarines to be built as the USS Oklahoma (SSN-802) and the USS Arizona (SSN-803)," Modly said in a news release. "It is my fondest wish that the citizens of the states of Arizona and Oklahoma will understand and celebrate our Navy's desire to memorialize the 1,177 heroes who perished in USS Arizona (BB-39) and the 429 more in USS Oklahoma (BB-37) in Pearl Harbor, on Dec. 7, 1941."

Modly added that "there is no greater honor I can think of for the Navy, the Marine Corps, and the nation than to build and commission into active service two state-of-the-art American warships carrying the spirit of those heroes of the greatest generation, as well as that of their families and the Grand Canyon and Sonoran states as they sail through a new American maritime century."

Approximately 18 million people annually visit the Pearl Harbor National Memorial, which includes the USS Arizona, USS Oklahoma and USS Utah memorials, six officer bungalows, three mooring quays and the Pearl Harbor Visitor Center.

"Today is a proud day for Arizona," Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey said in a news release. "It's been nearly 80 years since the attacks on Pearl Harbor ... This ship and the name, 'USS Arizona,' hold special meaning for our country, its history and the people of Arizona — and today, that legacy begins a new chapter."



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MILITARY

Panama: Moldy fruit, sorcery on Noriega's trail

FROM FRONT PAGE

the presidency to an opposition leader who had won a May 1989 election in a landslide, only to see Noriega negate it and declare himself "maximum leader."

His Panama Defense Forces headquarters in ruins, Noriega went to ground, setting off a manhunt by U.S. forces before he slipped into the Vatican Embassy on Christmas Eve in 1989 to request political asylum. The Brazilian sorceress vanished too, triggering what might accurately be called a witch hunt.

The religious paraphernalia and occult items that Noriega left behind in what soldiers dubbed "the witch house" provided a fascinating glimpse into the psyche of an enigmatic man who had been a CIA asset during his rise to power, yet had also helped rebels in Central and South America and had profited from drug and arms trafficking. Reviled by many Panamanians and mocked with the nickname "Pineapple Face" for his acne-scarred complexion, Noriega wielded power as military commander through figurehead presidents.

U.S. investigators came to believe after his ouster that many of his puzzling actions could be attributed to his occult rituals. But in the end, witchcraft proved no match for the 82nd Airborne and other troops that descended on Panama City in the early hours of Dec. 20, 1989.

The events that led to that point began building the previous year, when Noriega was indicted by two federal grand juries in Florida on drug trafficking, money laundering and racketeering charges and Panamanians stepped up demonstrations against his repressive rule. Noriega, in turn, escalated police and military harassment of Americans living in Panama, who numbered more than 40,000 in the country of 2.2 million people.

The unrest came to a head after the May 7, 1989, presidential election, when exit polls and partial returns showed opposition leader Endara winning by a 3-to-1 margin over Noriega's candidate, businessman Carlos Duque. Unable to reverse its overwhelming defeat at the polls, the regime annulled the election and dispatched troops.

In October, Noriega further centralized control when he put down a coup attempt and, according to U.S. intelligence reports, personally participated in executing the leaders.

The regime in mid-December declared Noriega to be in a "state of emergency" with the United States and named Noriega "maximum leader for national liberation," while continuing to harass Americans.

For President George H.W. Bush, the last straw came the next night, when four unarmed American servicemen were taken to dinner in the city. A wrong



Department of Defense

Flames engulf a building after hostilities between the Panamanian Defense Force and U.S. forces during Operation Just Cause.



United States Army Military History Institute

U.S. Army personnel take part in the operations conducted in Panama in 1989.

turn led them to a checkpoint in front of the Comandancia, where a confrontation ensued. As the Americans tried to drive away, Panamanian forces opened fire on their car, killing a Marine, 1st Lt. Robert Paz.

Bush launched the invasion, dubbed Operation Just Cause, a little more than 72 hours later. U.S. forces besieged Noriega's Comandancia and quickly rolled up his 16,000-member Panama Defense Forces. But they did nothing to stop an outbreak of looting that followed.

An estimated 300 civilians died during and immediately after the invasion, including those killed in the looting, according to Panama's Forensic Registry. The U.S. military reported 23 of its troops and 314 enemy combatants killed in the fighting.

Noriega, meanwhile, had disappeared.

In addition to searching for him, the Army also was looking for evidence of drug trafficking. Which brings us back to Noriega's two-story house near a U.S. officers' club at Fort Amador, a military base used jointly by U.S. and Panamanian forces. It was there that soldiers found a freezer full of bundles of banana leaves wrapped around a white powdery substance that they initially declared was cocaine.

It wasn't. The Army later retracted that announcement and said the soldiers had actually found a stash of tamales. But that wasn't quite right, either.

Dibble, the Army's Criminal Investigation Command agent, was called in to help investigate and quickly realized that the "tamales" were part of what he called "evil sorcery." In this case, "binding rituals" intended to neutralize opponents by sym-

bolically enclosing them in gooey substances.

Indeed, inside the "tamales" were slips of paper with the names of enemies written on them. One particularly smelly one contained the names of former New York Times reporter Seymour Hersh, who had written about Noriega's involvement in drug and arms smuggling, and Reagan administration national security adviser John Poindexter.

Also recovered was a glutinous ball of cornmeal wrapped in blue ribbon and white string. Dibble opened it to find a picture of Endara crumpled inside. A photo of former President Ronald Reagan was stuck in an ashtray under a layer of red wax.

Papers found with moldy fruit contained the names of Bush and two U.S. senators, as well as a general reference to "Congress U.S.A." Also listed: Henry Kiss-

inger, U.S. military and embassy officials, the presidents of Venezuela and Costa Rica, Catholic leaders including the archbishop of Panama, the U.N. secretary general, various Panamanian opposition figures and even close Noriega allies and military officers, suggesting mistrust within his inner circle.

Dibble, an expert on the occult who taught on the subject at a Tennessee university at the time, determined that Noriega practiced different Latin American religions that mixed African tribal beliefs and Roman Catholicism. They included the "benevolent magic" of Santería and Candomblé, as well as the "evil magic" of brujería, or witchcraft.

That was where the Brazilian witch came in. Judging by a lit cigarette in an ashtray, she apparently fled the house minutes before U.S. troops arrived, leaving behind identity papers, photos and a diary in Portuguese.

She was identified as Rosileide dos Gracias Oliveira, then 27, a plump, dark-skinned woman from Rio de Janeiro whose picture hung on the walls of Noriega's home and office.

"I knew Noriega was diabolical ... and he ruled through fear," Dibble said this month. But until he walked into the witch house, he said, "I had no idea he was involved in any of this."

In early January 1990, Noriega abandoned his refuge in the Apostolic Nunciature. He was taken into U.S. custody and flown to Miami, where he was later tried and convicted. He served 17 years in federal detention before being extradited to France, which subsequently sent him back to Panama. He died in custody there in 2017 at age 83.

What happened to Oliveira, the Brazilian sorceress, remains a mystery. Dibble believes she managed to flee Panama and make her way back to Brazil.

And investigators never were able to discern the name on that rotten cow tongue.

NATION

Dems test whether voters will shrug off impeachment

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE

Associated Press

GUTHRIE CENTER, Iowa — Rep. Cindy Axne happily talked about trade, health care and agriculture with about three dozen constituents who gathered in a farm bureau office the weekend before Christmas. Missing from the Iowa Democrat's talking points: her recent vote to impeach President Donald Trump.

Over the course of an hour, the issue that most clearly represents Washington's Trump-era polarization came up just once. And even then, it was from a questioner who thanked Axne for supporting the two articles that cleared the House last week in a party-line vote.

Axne seemed a little surprised by the muted reaction.

"I thought we'd have more," she told The Associated Press. "I get plenty of feedback, and we get plenty of calls into our office from folks who are on both sides."

It was a stark difference from one of the last times Axne was back in her congressional district, which stretches from the state

capital, Des Moines, across rural, southwestern Iowa. During that trip over the Thanksgiving break, the crowd was testy about the prospect of impeachment and one constituent implored her to "get stuff done."

Axne's effort to stay laser-focused on policy may be the playbook vulnerable Democrats across the country deploy over the next year as they try to navigate the unpredictable political fallout from impeachment. Trump and his Republican allies insist voters will punish Democrats who backed impeachment. But the notable lack of protest at Axne's event could give Democrats hope they can survive one of the most controversial votes they've had to take in recent memory.

"Iowans care about the issues," Axne said. "They might not have my vote on impeachment, but they have bigger things to worry about."

Axne is facing a potential rematch against David Young, the GOP incumbent she deposed. Republicans have been running impeachment-focused television

ads against her since early October, and Vice President Mike Pence appeared on a Des Moines television station last week to urge Axne to split with her party on the issue.

Bryan Mowrer, 64, a farmer who opened up the farm bureau's office for the town hall, said the tepid response was partly a result of timing. It was an unseasonably warm weekend afternoon just days before Christmas and farmers were about two months behind on their planting for the upcoming spring.

He said his phone had been "buzzing nonstop" with questions for Axne from farmers who couldn't attend. But most were focused on the recent trade deal Trump struck with Democrats. Mowrer himself asked Axne why the USMCA took so long to pass.

While the crowd at Axne's town hall was mostly favorable, down the street at the only restaurant open in town on Saturday evening, the dinner crowd seemed more characteristic of the county overall.

"As a taxpayer, (impeachment



ALEXANDRA JAFFE/AP

Rep. Cindy Axne, D-Iowa, speaks to constituents about her vote on the USMCA trade deal in Guthrie Center, Iowa, on Saturday. Only one of Axne's constituents raised the issue of her vote against the president in impeachment proceedings during the town hall.

is) a waste of time and money. The Democrats have not done anything in the last three years, and they could've done this USMCA a year ago but they didn't. They drug it out," said Clete Steensen, 68, who came to enjoy dinner with his wife.

Steensen, a farmer, had been working all day "or I would've come in and given her a piece of my mind," he said of Axne's town hall.

There was also some evidence that impeachment could backfire on Democrats, as Republicans have argued, and fire up the GOP base.

Joyce Stracke, 57, a nurse, called the impeachment proceedings a "witch hunt." Language Trump has also used in describing the effort.

"I think it's ridiculous what the Democrats are doing," she said. "They're just for themselves. They're not worried about people."

Stracke didn't vote in 2016, but she's thinking seriously about it in 2020. She's been happy with Trump's presidency, and after watching the impeachment hearings, she thinks he deserves defending.

"It just made me feel stronger about Donald Trump," she said.

Committee raises prospect of more impeachment articles

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House Judiciary Committee held open the possibility Monday of recommending additional articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump as it pressed anew for the testimony of former White House counsel Don McGahn.

The committee wants a federal appeals court to order McGahn to testify as it examines potential obstruction of justice by the president during special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation. The committee says McGahn's testimony could also be useful for any Senate impeachment trial.

A judge last month directed McGahn to comply with the House Judiciary Committee subpoena, and a Washington-based appeals court is scheduled to hear arguments Jan. 3.

In a court filing Monday, lawyers for the committee said McGahn's testimony remains essential even though the House has already voted to impeach Trump on two charges related to his interjections with Ukraine rather than on actions uncovered during Mueller's Russia probe.

"If McGahn's testimony produces new evidence supporting the conclusion that President Trump committed impeachable offenses that are covered by the Articles," approved by the House, the Com-

mittee will proceed accordingly — including, if necessary, by considering whether to recommend new articles of impeachment," lawyers for the Democratic-led committee wrote.

The committee also said McGahn's testimony is important for the committee's oversight role of the FBI and the Justice Department, "including in determining whether those agencies are operating free from improper political interference."

The Justice Department has asked the appeals court to dismiss the case.

The department also says the need for resolving the case is less urgent now that the House has moved ahead with impeachment articles even without McGahn's testimony.

But the committee disagrees.

"The House's vote on the Articles of Impeachment against President Trump underscores the Committee's urgent need for expedited consideration of this appeal," lawyers for the panel wrote.

"As discussed above, McGahn's testimony is critical both to a Senate trial and to the Committee's ongoing investigation efforts to determine whether additional presidential misconduct warrants further action by the Committee," they added.

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NATION

Baltics: US cash to help air defense

Associated Press

HELSINKI — The United States has allocated \$175 million in military aid to the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania for 2020, the Estonian Defense Ministry said Monday.

The three countries are NATO members and all of them border Russia.

The Estonian Defense Ministry said that along with \$125 million in general military aid, Washington has for the first time earmarked a separate \$50 million budget line to boost air defense capabilities of the three ex-Soviet republics — seen by many military experts as a weak area in their current defense.

The overall aim of U.S. military aid to Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius is to strengthen “the deterrence and defense posture in the Baltic States including in the area of airspace and especially in the field of air defense,” Estonian Defense Minister Juri Luik said in a statement.

The three Baltic nations, which joined NATO in 2004, are all staunch allies of Washington.

They have been highly worried over what they have perceived to be waning interest by President Donald Trump’s administration in trans-Atlantic relations and NATO’s joint defense commitment, particularly since Trump had earlier called the military alliance obsolete.

But Estonia sees the U.S. military aid as a sign that Washington’s commitment to NATO and the Baltic states is strong.

“Our (U.S.) ally clearly confirms its commitment to (NATO’s) collective defense on Europe’s eastern flank,” Luik said in a statement, referring to the financial aid.

As Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have no fighter aircraft, NATO fighter jets are responsible for policing Baltic airspace on a four-month rotational basis from bases in Estonia and Lithuania. Luik stressed “the transition from (Baltic) air policing to air defense requires a common decision from all (NATO) allies, but the U.S. position and practical support are of great importance.”

The ministry said the Baltic region’s proper air defense would consist of a well-functioning early warning system, surveillance capabilities and anti-aircraft weapon systems and skilled staff.

It said the U.S. National Defense Authorization Act bill granting aid to the Baltic countries was signed by Trump last week. The bill includes a solidarity clause confirming Washington’s commitment to the Baltic region.



CHARLIE NEIBERGALL/AP

Right: Congressional Hispanic Caucus member Rep. Tony Cardenas, D-Calif., left, speaking to a reporter in 2014, says former Vice President Joe Biden, above, is Democrats’ best hope to defeat President Donald Trump in 2020.

J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

Biden gets key endorsement in battle for Latino support

Associated Press

Joe Biden’s presidential bid got a boost Monday from one of the leading Latinos in Congress, with the chairman of the Hispanic Caucus’ political arm endorsing the former vice president as Democrats’ best hope to defeat President Donald Trump.

“People realize it’s a matter of life and death for certain communities,” Rep. Tony Cardenas, D-Calif., told The Associated Press in an interview, explaining the necessity of halting Trump’s populist nationalism, hard-line immigration policies and xenophobic rhetoric that the California congressman called cruel.

Cardenas is the chairman of Bold PAC, the political arm of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

His announcement follows presidential candidate Bernie Sanders’ weekend of mass rallies with Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a freshman congresswoman from New York who has become a face of the progressive movement and a key supporter for the Vermont senator’s second White House bid.

The dueling surrogates highlight a fierce battle for the Hispanic vote between Sanders and Biden, whose campaigns each see the two candidates as the leading contenders.

Biden leads the field among Democratic voters who are nonwhite, a group that includes Democratic voters who are Hispanic, with Sanders not far behind, according to national polling.

Another top national contender, Sen. Elizabeth Warren, draws less support from nonwhite voters. There are few recent national polls with the establishment sample of Hispanic Democratic voters to analyze them independently.

The dynamics also demonstrate the starkly different approaches that Biden and Sanders take to the larger campaign. Biden is capitalizing on his 36-year Senate career and two terms as Barack Obama’s vice president to corral Democratic power players across the party’s various demographic slices.

Cardenas joins four other Hispanic caucus members who have already backed Biden, a show of establishment support in contrast to some Latino activists who have battered Biden over the Obama administration’s deportation record. Sanders, true to his long Capitol Hill tenure as an outsider and democratic socialist, eschews the establishment with promises of a political revolution, just as he did when he finished as runner-up for Democrats’ 2016 nomination.

Together, it’s an argument on politics and policy at the crux of Democrats’ 2020 nominating fight.

Sanders and his supporters like Ocasio-Cortez argue that existing political structures cannot help working-class Americans, immigrants or anyone else. That argument, they insist, can draw enough



CHARLIE NEIBERGALL/AP

Marc Koverer waits to enter a community event Saturday for Biden in Ottumwa, Iowa. Biden’s campaign got a boost with an endorsement from the chairman of the Hispanic Caucus’ political arm.

new, irregular voters to defeat Trump in November.

“We need to be honest here,” retorted Texas Rep. Vicente Gonzalez, a Biden supporter whose congressional district includes part of the U.S.-Mexico border. “If Joe Biden loses the primary, Democrats will lose in 2020.”

It’s impossible for polling almost a year ahead of a general election to affirm that view, but the contention echoes Biden’s consistent arguments about Electoral College math.

Texas Rep. Filemon Vela, also a border district congressman who backs Biden, was not so absolute. But he said Biden is best positioned for a general election on immigration because of his plans to roll back Trump’s immigration restrictions and boost the asylum process, while stopping short of decriminalizing all border crossings. Sanders supports making all border crossings civil offenses, rather than criminal, a position first pushed by the lone Hispanic presidential candidate and former Obama housing secretary Julian Castro.

“In some swing states, that might not go over well,” Vela said, even as he, Gonzalez and Cardenas said the distinction is more important to political pundits than to Hispanic voters.

Hispanic voters are a rapidly growing portion of the U.S. population and electorate, though they have consistently had lower election-participation rates than blacks and non-Hispanic whites.

Ex-governor calls for Gabbard resignation

Associated Press

HONOLULU — A former Hawaii governor on Monday called for long-shot presidential candidate Tulsi Gabbard to resign from Congress after she voted “present” on two articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump.

Gabbard must resign her seat “the sooner the better,” representing Hawaii in the U.S. House of Representatives because “she’s missing votes on almost everything,” said Neil Abercrombie, who was governor from 2010 to 2014. Before that, he represented Hawaii in the U.S. House and resigned to run for governor.

Gabbard said last week she was “standing in the center” by voting present.

Gabbard announced earlier this year she would not run for reelection to the House so she could focus on her presidential campaign.

This decision came after she spent much of the year traveling to Iowa and New Hampshire.

According to the website govtrack.us, Gabbard missed 88.7% of the 141 House votes taken in the past three months.

Abercrombie is co-chair for the campaign of Kai Kahele, a Democratic state senator running to succeed Gabbard in Congress.

A spokesman for Gabbard said she has a strong commitment to serving Hawaii.

“Hawaii is Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard’s home and her heart. Just this session, she has secured major legislative wins for Hawaii including better reporting on Red Hill aquifer protection, consultation between the military and Native Hawaiians, helping our veterans affected by toxic burn pits, opportunities for defense contracting for Native Hawaiian companies, and more,” T. Iliha Gionson said. “Her pursuit of the highest office in the land has not compromised her and her team’s commitment to serving the people of Hawaii in her fourth term in Congress.”

Hawaii’s other representative in the House, Rep. Ed Case, an other Democrat, voted in favor of impeachment.

According to the website govtrack.us, Rep. Tulsi Gabbard missed 88.7% of the 141 House votes taken in the past three months



Abercrombie

NATION

Key evangelicals blast anti-Trump editorial

By ELANA SCHOR
Associated Press

As the political clamor caused by a top Christian magazine's call to remove President Donald Trump from office continues to reverberate, more than 100 conservative evangelicals closed ranks further around Trump on Sunday.

In a letter to the president of Christianity Today magazine, the group of evangelicals chided Editor-in-Chief Mark Galli for penning an anti-Trump editorial, published Thursday, that they portrayed as a dig at their characters as well as the president's.

"Our editorial offensively questioned the spiritual integrity and Christian witness of tens-of-millions of believers who take seriously their civic and moral obligations," the evangelicals wrote to the magazine's president, Timothy D. Lutz.

The new offensive from the group of prominent evangelicals,

including multiple members of Trump's evangelical advisory board, signals a lingering awareness by the president's backers that any meaningful crack in his longtime support from that segment of the Christian community could prove perilous for his reelection hopes. Though no groundswell of new anti-Trump sentiment emerged among evangelicals in the wake of Christianity Today's editorial, the president fired off scathing tweets Friday accusing the establishment magazine — founded by the late Rev. Billy Graham in 1956 — of becoming a captive of the left.

The letter sent Sunday also included a veiled warning that Christianity Today could lose readership or advertising revenue as a result of the editorial, which cites Trump's impeachment last week.

Citing Galli's past characterization of himself as an "elite" evangelical, the letter's authors told Dalrymple that "it's up to your

publication to decide whether or not your magazine intends to be a voice of evangelicals like those represented by the signatories below, and it is up to us and those Evangelicals like us to decide if we should subscribe to, advertise in and read your publication online and in print, but historically, we have been your readers."

Among the signatories of the letter are George Wood, chairman of the World Assemblies of God Fellowship; the Rev. Tim Hill, of the Church of God; and former Minnesota GOP Rep. Michele Bachmann.

Galli told CBS' "Face the Nation" on Sunday that he views the chances of Trump leaving office, either through a reelection loss or post-impeachment conviction by the Senate, as "probably fairly slim at this point." The editor-in-chief defended his editorial as less of a "political judgment" than a call for fellow evangelicals to examine their tolerance of Trump's "moral character" in exchange

for his embrace of conservative policies high on their agenda.

"We're not looking for saints. We do have private sins, ongoing patterns of behavior that reveal themselves in our private life that we're all trying to work on," Galli said Sunday. "But a president has certain responsibilities as a public figure to display a certain level of public character and public morality."

Galli referred comment on Sunday's evangelical letter to Dalrymple, who on Sunday published his own strongly worded defense of the magazine's anti-Trump commentary.

Countering Trump's suggestion that the magazine had shifted to favor liberals, Dalrymple wrote that the publication is in fact "theologically conservative" and "does not endorse candidates."

"Out of love for Jesus and his church, not for political partisanship or intellectual elitism, this is why we feel compelled to say that the alliance of American evan-

gelicalism with this presidency has wrought enormous damage to Christian witness," Dalrymple wrote.

Asked about the editorial's indictment of Trump by "Fox News Sunday," Marc Short — chief of staff to Vice President Mike Pence, himself a prominent evangelical Christian — cited some of the policy positions that have helped endear the president to many in that voting bloc.

"For a lot of us who are celebrating the birth of our Savior this week, the way that we look at it is that this president has helped to save thousands of similar unplanned pregnancies," Short said Sunday, adding that "no president has been a greater ally to Israel than this president."

Roughly 8 in 10 white evangelical Protestants say they approve of the way Trump is handling his job, according to a December poll from The AP-NORC Center.

SF cafes on a cup crusade

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — A new cafe culture is brewing in the San Francisco area, where a growing number of coffee houses are banishing paper to-go cups and replacing them with everything from glass jars to rental mugs and BYO cup policies.

What started as a small trend among neighborhood cafes to reduce waste is gaining support from some big names in the city's food and coffee world.

Celebrated chef Dominique Crenn, owner of the three-star Michelin restaurant Atelier Crenn, is opening a San Francisco cafe next year that will have no to-go bags or disposable coffee cups and will use no plastic. Customers who plan to sip and go at Boutique Crenn will be encouraged to bring their own coffee cups, said spokeswoman Kate Bittman.

On a bigger scale, the Blue Bottle coffeehouse chain, which goes through about 15,000 to-go cups a month at its 70 U.S. locations, says it wants to "show our guests and the world that we can eliminate disposable cups."

Blue Bottle is starting small with plans to stop using paper cups at two of its San Francisco area branches in 2020, as part of a pledge to go "zero waste" by the end of next year. Coffee to-go customers will have to bring their own mug or pay a deposit for a reusable cup which they can keep or return for a refund. The deposit fee will likely be between \$3 and \$5, the company said.



ERIC RISBERG/AP

A Blue Bottle Coffee paper to-go cup rests on a table outside one of its cafes in San Francisco. The chain says it's getting rid of disposable cups at two locations next year as part of a pledge to go "zero-waste" at its 70 U.S. locations by the end of 2020.

Blue Bottle's pilot program will help guide the company on how to expand the idea nationwide, CEO Bryan Meehan said in a statement.

"We expect to lose some business," he said. "We know some of our guests won't like it — and we're prepared for that."

Larger coffee and fast-food chains around the U.S. are feeling a sense of urgency to be more environmentally friendly and will be watching, said Bridget Croke, of New York-based recycling investment firm Closed Loop Partners, which is working with Starbucks and McDonald's to develop an eco-friendly alternative to the disposable coffee cup.

Despite the name, today's conventional paper cups for hot drinks aren't made solely from paper. They also have plastic linings that prevent leakage but make them hard to recycle,

Croke said. She said it's unlikely large national chains will banish disposable cups in the immediate term or persuade all customers to bring mugs, so they're looking for other solutions. Starbucks and McDonald's chipped in \$10 million to a partnership with Closed Loop to develop the "single-use cup of the future" that is recyclable and compostable.

"They know there are business risks to not solving these problems. And the cup is the tip of the spear for them," said Croke, adding that Blue Bottle's choice of San Francisco for its test run is clearly the right market.

Starbucks, which has more than 15,000 U.S. cafes and about 16,000 internationally, plans to test newly designed recyclable cups in five cities next year: San Francisco, Seattle, New York, Vancouver and London, spokeswoman Noelle Novoa said.

Feds: Gang members' 'sextortion' from prison hit GLs, netted \$140K

By CHARLES DUNCAN
The (Columbia, S.C.) State

Gang members in prison in South Carolina made at least \$144,000 in a "sextortion ring" involving nude photos and smuggled cellphones, federal officials say.

At least a dozen people have been charged and several have pleaded guilty, including a convicted murderer who was already sentenced to decades behind bars, prosecutors say.

Now eight more people have been indicted for money laundering in connection with the scam. Earlier this year, prosecutors said more than 400 members of the military were scammed by the "sextortion ring" run from South Carolina prisons. Prosecutors said the scheme netted \$560,000 for the inmates and their accomplices on the outside.

The indictment, filed recently in federal court in Florence, accuses the eight people of accepting nearly 75 "fraudulent money transfers" from victims.

As part of the scheme, prison inmates used cellphones with internet connections to target men in the military on dating apps, federal prosecutors say. The inmates would pretend to be women and send nude photos to the victims, according to prosecutors. The inmates would then pretend to be the angry father of an underage girl and threaten the victims with going to police and accusing them of soliciting nude photos from a minor, according to court filings.

One Army veteran killed him-

self after being targeted by the scammers, a family told The Greenville News.

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FAITH



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Survey: Sermon lengths getting shorter

By SARAH PULLIAM BAILEY
The Washington Post

One of America's most famous sermons, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," probably took Jonathan Edwards close to an hour to deliver in 1741. Today, most white Protestant pastors wouldn't dare keep people in the pews that long.

In a new report released Monday, the Pew Research Center analyzed nearly 50,000 sermons posted online by 6,431 churches this year to find out how long Christian clergy preach and the words they use that distinguish them from one another.

Pew analyzed audio, video and word count of sermons to estimate the length of sermons in different denominations. The average length of a sermon, researchers found, is 37 minutes, but there are "striking differences" across traditions:

- 14 minutes for Catholics.
- 25 minutes for mainline Protestants.
- 39 minutes for evangelicals.
- 54 minutes for historically black Protestants.

Several pastors face pressure to keep trimming the length of sermons to fit people's minimal attention spans, said the Rev. Tim Keller, the longtime evangelical pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City.

"I don't think most evangelical pastors are good enough for a 39-minute sermon," Keller said. "That needs to shorten."

Keller said when he started preaching 40 years ago, regular church attendance meant someone was in the pew three out of four Sundays. That number has dropped; now, a regular churchgoer appears maybe 1.75 out of four Sundays. He wonders whether that's because many are listening to sermons via podcast or online streaming as a fallback to showing up for a service.

"If I preach a good sermon, if you're in

the midst of other people, you're going to remember it more and be shaped by it than if you pick up in a podcast somewhere," he said. "If it's totally supplemental, then it's fine. If, on the other hand, if it undermines the times you're in Christian community, it's disastrous."

In a sermon heard around the world last year, the Rev. Michael Curry, who is the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, delivered a message at the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan in about 13 minutes. In that message, he said, he focused on love because it was a universal theme.

"I was very aware in the sermon I was preaching that I couldn't default to Christian vocabulary," he said.

He said he learned to preach to a broad range of people when he was a minister in southern Ohio, preaching to someone who did domestic work and another person with a doctorate.

Curry said he prepares his sermons throughout the week by tapping notes on his iPhone, usually telling a story with one takeaway instead of several.

"A pitfall is to explain a story too much," Curry said. "If you start explaining a story, you're messing it up. Your job is to paint the picture, tell the story."

Historically black Protestant churches have been at the center of many black Americans' lives, but more black pastors are trimming their services to adapt to

people's attention spans, said Suzan Johnson Cook, who has served as a pastor for the past 30 years.

"One day a week for one hour a week, we deposit not just scripture but history and the application," said Cook, who was the ambassador for international religious freedom under President Barack Obama. "You have a lot to cover, including social issues."

The homily is a much-disputed topic in Catholic parishes, and black parishes often include longer homilies. Many priests believe that the homily, which often includes insight, theological reflection and practical challenges, shouldn't distract from the Eucharist.

The Rev. John Baldovin, a Jesuit priest who is a professor of liturgy and the sacraments at Boston College, estimates that the average Catholic priest spends two hours preparing for a sermon, devoting the rest of the week to managing the parish or other ministry needs, such as visiting people in the hospital.

"I won't preach more than 10 minutes on a Sunday," said Baldovin, who splits his time at parishes near Boston. "You can tell when people are ready for you to land a plane. There's nothing worse than listening to a plane come into the runway and take off again."

Pew's survey also found that certain words and phrases are used more frequently in the sermons of some Christian

groups.

Evangelical sermons mention "eternal hell" and phrases about trespassing and sin and salvation more often than other Christian sermons; just under 1 in 10 individual evangelical sermons mentions those terms. Catholic homilies tend to use "Eucharist" and "chalice" more, pointing to the focus in Catholic churches on receiving the Eucharist.

Churchgoers at historically black Protestant churches were eight times as likely as others to hear a phrase including the word "hallelujah." The language that most distinguishes sermons in mainline Protestant churches include "disciple ... betray," and "bent ... look," phrases tied to biblical stories.

Edwards' famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," provided imagery that God holds a spider over the fiery pit of hell to describe the wrath of God. Edwards taught that you understand through your senses, not through your reasoning, Keller said, and that the purpose of the sermon is not just to make an idea clear, but to make it real.

"Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" is odd; it's severe, and not how he preached all the time. It's a model of his method," Keller said. "The difference between clear and real is preaching that connects the truth to sensory experiences."

The churches in the survey are not representative of all houses of worship or even all Christian churches in the United States; they make up a small percentage of the estimated 350,000-plus religious congregations nationwide, Pew notes.

The churches that post sermons online tend to be in urban areas and have larger than average congregations, according to Pew's report.

'A pitfall is to explain a story too much. If you start explaining a story, you're messing it up. Your job is to paint the picture, tell the story.'

The Rev. Michael Curry
presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Police: Man fired gun, swung ax while drunk

DE HARTLY — Police in Delaware said they arrested a man after he fired a gun and swung an ax at friends while in an apparent drunken rage. The News Journal of Wilmington reported that the incident occurred Saturday near the town of Hartly.

Delaware State Police said Michael Rhinehardt, 20, was charged with five counts of reckless endangering, five counts of aggravated menacing and one firearms charge.

Witnesses told police that Rhinehardt had started an argument with friends before grabbing a gun and firing multiple shots into the floor and wall. Friends intervened and threw the gun out of the house.

Police said Rhinehardt then ran outside, grabbed an ax and swung it at two friends.

Coast Guard: Shark bite 'terrifying' for surfer

CA SANTA BARBARA — A shark reportedly bit a surfer Saturday afternoon off Southern California in a "truly terrifying situation," the U.S. Coast Guard said.

The 37-year-old man had been surfing near Santa Rosa Island, one of the Channel Islands, during the attack, according to a news release. A friend aboard a nearby boat applied a tourniquet to his leg and called the Coast Guard for help, the news release stated. A helicopter crew flew the man to the Santa Barbara airport for treatment, and he was in stable condition Saturday evening.

"This was the best possible outcome to a truly terrifying situation," Coast Guard Lt. Benjamin McIntyre-Coble said in the news release.

Mailman credited with saving Christmas gifts

KS OSAWATOMIE — A U.S. postal employee rushed to rescue gifts after the engine of his mail truck caught fire in rural Kansas.

The Osawatomie Fire Department said in a Facebook post Sunday that "Your Prime delivery may have just lost its Prime. The good news is, the mailman saved Christmas!"

Photos show packages lined up along a country road just south of Osawatomie. The engine compartment of the truck was destroyed.

Police: Worker shot over child's haircut

TX KATY — A dispute over a child's haircut ended with gunfire Saturday at a Texas barbershop, according to authorities.

Deputies are looking for a man who shot an employee of a barbershop in the Houston suburb of Katy during an argument, the Harris County Sheriff's Office said in a tweet Saturday. Witnesses at the argument was over a haircut given to the man's son.



GILLIAN JONES, THE BERKSHIRE (MASS.) EAGLE/AP

Impromptu rink

Syd and Isaac Ugdatt, Ben and Amy Harrington and Lee DeRosa make the ice for skating at Windsor Lake in North Adams, Mass., on Sunday. While Syd was ice fishing, the youths wanted to play hockey and got some help to clear the snow off of the lake surface.

The alleged shooter left in a grey, four-door sedan, according to the sheriff's office.

The employee was shot three times and was in stable condition at an area hospital, KPRC-TV reported Saturday.

Police: Man robbed 47 storage units in an hour

MD KENSINGTON — Authorities in Maryland are searching for a man they say robbed 47 storage units in about an hour.

Surveillance video shows the man entered the facility in Kensington on Dec. 2 about 9:40 p.m., The Washington Post reported, citing Montgomery County police. He got into the facility by closely following a car that had access to a security gate, according to a police statement.

The man is seen leaving the facility in a white sedan about 10:52 p.m.

During his time in the facility, the man broke the locks to 47 storage units, stole property from them and rummaged through two cars, police said. Police didn't immediately say how much the stolen property was worth.

Police collect more than 236 tons of food

KY FRANKFORT — Kentucky State Police col-

THE CENSUS

30

The distance in feet that a hunter fell, ending up waist-deep in cold water, when he dropped down an abandoned mine shaft. Frank Dawson, of Washington, Pa., was hunting in woods Saturday in eastern Ohio when he fell into the grass-covered shaft, the Herald-Star in Steubenville reported. Dawson had his cellphone and was able to give rescuers good directions, and they found him about 300 yards from his vehicle, said Rob Herrington, leader of Jefferson County Urban Search and Rescue. Rescuers used a harness and pulley system to pull out Dawson's loaded gun and then Dawson, who was not injured.

lected more than 236 tons of food for Kentucky families with the 10th annual "Cram the Cruiser" food drive.

"Helping those in need is the core of what being a member of the KSP family really is — service to others," Sgt. Josh Lawson, spokesman for the state police, said in a news release.

State police initiated the program in 2010. Since then, the agency has contributed nearly 2 million pounds of food to shelters, food banks and churches around the state.

Aquarium takes in cold-stunned turtles

NC MANTEO — Cold weather is causing a problem for some sea turtles off the North Carolina coast, and an aquarium has taken in dozens of them for treatment.

TV station WVEC-TV reported 96 turtles were taken to the North

Carolina Aquarium on Roanoke Island after a drop in temperatures on Thursday and Friday. More are expected to be treated there in the coming days.

Dropping water temperatures can cause cold-stunning, a condition similar to hypothermia that makes turtles unable to swim properly.

The recovery process involves gradually warming the turtles up over a few days.

According to the TV station, the center closed to the public beginning Sunday to accommodate all of the turtles.

Church to pay \$5.3M in family medical bills

CA LOS ANGELES — A Los Angeles church is paying off \$5.3 million worth of medical debt for nearly 6,000 households in Southern California, according to one of the church's pastors.

Christian Assembly purchased the debt for \$53,000 and is working with a nonprofit organization to pay the outstanding bills for 5,555 families in 28 neighborhoods, co-lead pastor Tom Hughes said in a video posted online Thursday.

The church will also help the recipients repair their credit scores, Hughes said.

Flight has rough landing in Denver

CO DENVER — A United Airlines flight from New Jersey's Newark Liberty International Airport had a rough landing in Denver.

The crew aboard Flight 2429 reported a mechanical issue after the Boeing 737-800 landed safely shortly after 7 p.m. Sunday. It was not clear what was wrong; however, some passengers said they saw sparks on the runway.

Passengers used a stairway to get off the plane and were bused to the terminal where they were assisted by customer service teams.

"The aircraft has been taken out of service and is being inspected by our maintenance teams," United said in a statement.

No injuries were reported. The runway was closed for a period of time, but the airport said that did not affect other flights.

From wire reports

FACES

Tough, love

Radically different film roles show Dern's mastery of acting craft

By TIM GREIVING
Special to The Washington Post

Laura Dern sashays in, dressed for success in form-fitting blue jeans, red heels and a cascade of perfectly situated blond hair. "Sorry I look so schleppy," she says. "I had an event at my kid's school."

Dern is Nora, the cutthroat divorce lawyer in Noah Baumbach's "Marriage Story," out on Netflix. Beautiful but spiky, heartless but hilarious, the role is the culmination of a career full of fierce feminists and rebels. Midway through the film, she rails against the misguided double standards that Western society holds against mothers.

But in the (metaphorical) theater next door this month, Dern is Marmee, the ever-patient, ever-loving matriarch in Greta Gerwig's adaptation of "Little Women." Buttoned up in the finery of a proud poor woman in 1860s New England, Marmee is the radiant, nurturing nucleus of a house spinning with four rambunctious girls, led by Saoirse Ronan's Jo.

"It's interesting to have these two women, two characters, who have, honestly, the greatest feminist writing ever — in two completely different worlds," Dern said recently. "Between some of the lines I say to Saoirse — that are directly from the lines I say to Louisa (May Alcott) wrote in the 1860s — that I'm angry nearly every day of my life," and to talk about what it is to be an artist, and what it is to be a woman, and not to need to marry, and to love who you choose to love. I mean, it's some really radical thinking."

"And then, enter Century City divorce lawyer," she said, laughing, "and to have this monologue — that's absolutely accurate, you know, how mothers are measured differently than fathers — and with such sass, but also this sort of modern poetry of Noah's writing."

There was something "almost divine" about getting to play these two connected but wildly different roles in the same year, written by the two halves of a real-life couple.

"They really have a very similar rhythm in how they hear language," Dern said. "The words are so precise, but the mess they want to bring them forth, and the rhythm they need, is really amazing."

Baumbach and Gerwig are simply the latest filmmakers who are dying to work with Dern after watching her chart an adventurous and calibrated career over 40 years with directors such as David Lynch, Peter Bogdanovich, Robert Altman and Alexander Payne. Before her 25th birthday, she had played a pregnant teenager, a blind girl, a wide-eyed innocent and an outlaw's libidinous lover.

"What she was doing felt dangerous to me, in the best way," said Gerwig. "Because it felt like it was always at the very edge of what we can consider to be good taste, and that is the most wonderful acting and art of all. She was so committed to the truth of the thing that she completely stopped worrying about how she, Laura Dern, was coming across. It was just completely committed to the character, and committed to the extremities of the character."

Dern, 52, has been patiently planting a garden of projects, coupling with trusted collaborators — but she has often been taken for granted.

"Careers are long, and complicated," Dern said. "There definitely were periods of time where I either wasn't working, or wasn't getting offered things that I wanted to do."

Her connection with film quite literally goes back to the beginning: She was conceived on the



Jessica Pons/For The Washington Post

Laura Dern had two wildly different film roles this year: a cutthroat divorce lawyer in "Marriage Story" and a patient matriarch in "Little Women."

set of "The Wild Angels," a 1966 motorcycle movie in which her parents, Bruce Dern and Diane Ladd, both starred.

Dern grew up in the heart of Hollywood, rubbing shoulders with Alfred Hitchcock as a kid, and felt she was destined to act after Martin Scorsese complimented her ice-cream-eating endurance as an extra in "Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore."

She grew up fast, finishing high school early and being legally emancipated from her parents when she was 16 so she could have grown-up working freedom.

Bruce Dern gave his daughter two pieces of advice at the outset: "Learn how to dance" — i.e., don't let behind-the-scenes drama bother you — and "take risks." "You've got to go to the edge of the cliff," he told her, "and do roles other girls won't do."

When Dern was 18, Lynch cast her in his twisted suburban nightmare, "Blue Velvet," as the almost painfully innocent Sandy, who dreams of robins in a world gone to hell.

"I always thought she was wise beyond her years," said her co-star, Kyle MacLachlan. "She was just very intuitive and thoughtful and very aware. And she's never lost it."

When Dern watches her early performances now, she said, "I think I'm sort of patient like a mom. I feel proud of her for putting herself out there and being so young, and trying to be honest. I can also see the youth in certain things, but I'm not really critical. I don't know that I do that in my personal life," she confessed. "I think I beat myself up way more."

In some ways, modern Dern is equal parts Nora and Marmee: maternal, messy, dignified, ferocious. Gerwig finds it funny when people suggest that casting Dern as Marmee was counterintuitive.

"I knew that she would be loving, and she would be warm, and that she would be the mother we wish we had, and that also she would be able to be the person who says 'I'm angry almost every single day of my life' and we'd know that that was true," Gerwig said.

"And," the director added, "that she would be able to deliver to me the moment right before iconic Marmee starts. Who are you right before they walk in and say, 'Merry Christmas, my dears,' and they all crowd around you? Because there is a moment before, and I wanted the moment before, and I knew Laura could embody it."

Dern's onscreen daughter agrees.

"Marmee and Laura are very similar," said Ronan. "I feel like they're very sort of outspoken, but they also have like this talent for bringing people together."

Dern narrates audiobook

Laura Dern likes the spoken word so much she even enjoys callbacks to re-record lines for her movies.

"Some actors complain about it," she says. "But it gives me an opportunity to add something to the film."

Dern especially enjoyed a recent vocal project, serving as narrator for a new audiobook production of "Little Women" for Audible. Readers providing voices for the characters include Suzanne Toren, Lauren Fortgang and Alison Hiroto.

Dern's memories of "Little Women" date back to around age 13, when she and her grandmother would read it aloud together and when Dern read the novel by herself.

"It was an amazing time for me to read the book," she says. "It was around the time I was deciding to become an actress." Dern, 52, related to the Marches from the start. Like the March sisters, she was raised mostly by women; her parents divorced when she was little and she spent much of her time with her mother and grandmother. Filming the movie, and reading the audiobook, reminded her of her deep attachment to the fictional family, especially to Marmee.

"I got to walk in those shoes, and to figure how to do it with nobility," she said. "I found her available and messy and wise and funny, and a muse. I think we often make our heroes very angelic."

Asked if she has any books in mind that she'd love to narrate, she mentions the plays of Tennessee Williams and some works of humor.

"I've never read something that deeply irrelevant, so it would be really fun to read David Sedaris," she said. "I would love that."

From The Associated Press

Queen Elizabeth refers to 'bumpy' year in speech

Associated Press

Queen Elizabeth II plans to acknowledge that both Britain and her family have endured a difficult year by saying during her Christmas message that it has been a "bumpy" time.

The pre-recorded message will be broadcast in Britain and the Commonwealth nations on Christmas Day. It was recorded before the queen's husband, Prince Philip, was hospitalized in London as a precautionary measure.

Excerpts released by Buckingham Palace before the speech show the queen admits difficulties during the course of the year.

Talking about the need for reconciliation and forgiveness, Elizabeth says: "The path, of course, is not always smooth, and may at times this year have felt quite bumpy, but small steps can make a world of difference."

She is thought to be referring both to Britain's tortuous path out of the European Union, which led to a lengthy political stalemate broken only earlier this month, and to the royal family's setbacks.

The problems facing the queen's family this year included Prince Andrew's retreat from public duties because of a disastrous TV interview in which he defended his friendship with convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

The family has also endured a public rift between Prince William and Prince Harry, who has traveled with his wife Meghan and young son Archie to Canada rather than spend the Christmas holidays at Sandringham Estate, the queen's rural retreat.

Both Harry and Meghan have complained about constant scrutiny by the media.

The health of Philip, 98, has been a concern. He has been hospitalized in London for several days. Details about his condition haven't been made public.

'Light In the Piazza' author Spencer dies

Elizabeth Spencer, a grande dame of Southern literature who bravely navigated between the Jim Crow past and open-ended present in her novels and stories including the celebrated novella "Light In the Piazza," died Sunday in Chapel Hill, N.C., at age 98.

Old enough to know ex-slaves and Civil War veterans, Spencer chronicled her complicated affection for her ties to tiny Carrollton, Miss. — her determination to honor them and to leave them behind.

Her most famous work, "Light In the Piazza," is the story of a North Carolina woman who watches and worries as her mentally impaired daughter falls in love with an Italian. First published in The New Yorker and released in book form in 1960, it was an immediate critical favorite adapted into a 1962 movie and into a Broadway musical that in 2006 won six Tonys.

WORLD

In Banksy's Bethlehem, Christ born under scar

Associated Press

BETHLEHEM, West Bank — The mysterious street artist known as Banksy has displayed a politically charged Nativity scene in Bethlehem, the town revered as Jesus' birthplace, just in time for the busy Christmas season.

The artwork, named "Scar of Bethlehem," depicts the birth of Jesus under Israel's West Bank separation barrier with a bullet hole shaped like a star. The piece is displayed at the "Walled Off Hotel," a Palestinian guesthouse in Bethlehem that was designed by Banksy and is filled with his artwork.

Wisam Salsaa, the hotel manager, said the British artist recently sent the new piece to the hotel.

"We see there is a scar," he said. "A hole on the wall marks the end of the life in Bethlehem."

The hotel, which overlooks the separation barrier, sarcastically boasts "the worst view in the world." Since its opening in 2017, it has become a popular tourist



MAJDI MOHAMMED/AP

The Walled Off Hotel in Bethlehem displays the "Scar of Bethlehem," by the artist Banksy, featuring a Nativity scene under a star made by a bullet hole in Israel's West Bank separation barrier.

draw.

"Banksy is trying to remind the world that people of Bethlehem, where Christmas was started, are not celebrating Christmas like the rest of the world," he said.

Israel built the barrier in the early 2000s in what it said was a move to prevent Palestinian suicide bombers in the West Bank from reaching Israel. The Palestinians consider the barrier illegal and call it an Israeli land grab, noting that it has engulfed large chunks of the West Bank

onto the Israeli "side."

Bethlehem has been affected especially hard by the barrier, which surrounds large parts of the city.

Tourists flocked to the hotel Sunday to see the Nativity scene and other works by Banksy as part of their visit to the city during the peak Christmas season.

The British street artist, who carefully protects his anonymity, is believed to have made several past appearances in the Palestinian territories.

British intel agents now licensed to kill

Bloomberg

Britain's domestic intelligence service MI5 can authorize its agents to engage in criminal activities, potentially including murder, kidnap and torture, a London court ruled, as Prime Minister Boris Johnson's new government prepares to overhaul espionage laws.

Judges on the Investigatory Powers Tribunal declared in a majority decision that MI5 has the power to permit informants to operate in criminal groups, even if the policy itself confers no legal immunity. The case focused on powers that were discussed last year by then-Prime Minister Theresa May.

"The case raises one of the most profound issues which can face a democratic society governed by the rule of law," Judge Rabiner Singh said in the ruling.

The decision comes as Johnson seeks to update laws to bring them in line with the U.S. in a crackdown on spies, saboteurs and hackers working for foreign states such as Russia, North Korea and

Iran. Preventing MI5 from running agents in criminal organizations "would strike at the core activities of the Security Service," the judges said.

The tribunal cited the agency's own guidelines to agents and handlers that said the authorization "will be the service's explanation and justification of its decision," if the agent's activities were to be scrutinized by police or other prosecution authorities.

Human rights campaigning groups including Reprieve had asked the court to grant an injunction "restraining further unlawful conduct." The request was dismissed in a 3-2 decision, which was also the first time a dissenting opinion has ever been published in the tribunal's 20-year history, Reprieve said.

"The IPT's knife-edge judgment, with unprecedented published dissenting opinions, shows just how dubious the government's secret policy is," Maya Foa, Reprieve's director, said in a statement. She said the groups planned to seek permission to appeal.

Stripes

SERVICE DIRECTORY

The Daily Guide to Navigating the European Business Market

Dental

902

Transportation

944

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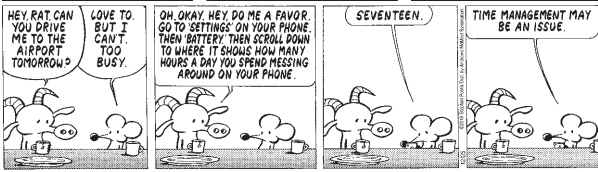
Frazz



Dilbert



Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15					16				17			
18									19	20		
					21				22			
23	24	25			26		27		28		29	30
31					32		33		34		35	
36					37		38		39		40	
					41		42		43		44	
45	46						47			48	49	50
51							52	53				
54							55			56		
57							58			59		

ACROSS

- 1 Sweet wine
- 5 English channel?
- 8 Distort
- 12 Actress Perlman
- 13 "Give — rest!"
- 14 Ersatz swing
- 15 Huge
- 17 Curry and Landers
- 18 Mail-related
- 19 Walmart competitor
- 21 — Paulo
- 22 Tolkien creatures
- 23 Buddy
- 26 "Ben-Hur" studio
- 28 Wanted-poster info
- 31 Oodles
- 33 Even so
- 35 Poet Pound
- 36 Like some floors
- 38 Male cat
- 40 Sushi fish
- 41 Pitcher Hershiser
- 43 "Platoon" locale
- 45 Pester
- 47 Showy flowers
- 51 Church section
- 52 Huge
- 54 Authentic
- 55 Somewhat (Suff.)
- 56 O'Hara estate
- 57 In a lazy way

DOWN

- 58 Youngster
- 59 Goblet feature
- 1 Get ready, briefly
- 2 "It can't be!"
- 3 Antique cars
- 4 Small fruit pies
- 5 High-school science course
- 6 A/C stat
- 7 Social group
- 8 Take by surprise
- 9 Huge
- 10 Sea eagle
- 11 Left on a map
- 16 Sir's counterpart
- 20 Santa — winds
- 23 Yoga pad
- 24 "Love Story" actress MacGraw
- 25 Huge
- 27 Convened
- 29 Exist
- 30 Erie Canal mule
- 32 In a succinct way
- 34 "West Side Story" song
- 37 Costa — Sol
- 39 Kate of "House of Cards"
- 42 On the up and up
- 44 Breath
- 45 Mata —
- 46 Mimicked
- 48 Doc's "Now!"
- 49 Ireland
- 50 Con job
- 53 Equi-

Answer to Previous Puzzle

P	O	L	E	E	C	O	G	O	B	S		
A	M	I	S	T	O	O	I	S	L	E		
G	I	F	T	S	H	O	P	F	L	I	T	
E	T	E	E	E	L	S	T	O	P	S		
			G	E	L	T	I	C				
T	U	R	I	N		G	I	R	A	F	F	E
A	S	I	F		P	A	N		R	O	O	F
B	O	B	T	A	I	L		A	D	E	P	T
			O	R	E	T	I	S				
B	L	U	F	F		F	I	N		A	H	S
L	O	N	G		G	I	F	T	W	R	A	P
T	A	D	A		E	L	F		A	L	L	A
S	N	O	B		E	M	S		N	O	O	N

12-25

CRYPTOQUIP

F'ZS TIE W DPOOH MKI
WDVIRPESRH RIZSV MBFEFJT
IJ DRWANDIWBOV. F EKFNJN

KS'V W AKWRNWKIRFA.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN NASAENGINEERS ARE LOUD AND ROWDY SPORTS, I GUESS YOU MIGHT CALL THEM RAUCOUS SCIENTISTS.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: D equals B

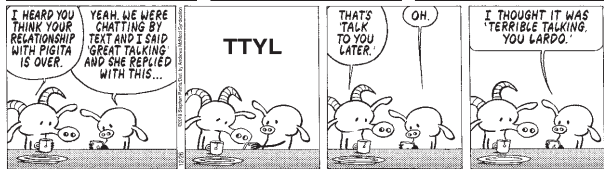
Frazz



Dilbert



Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



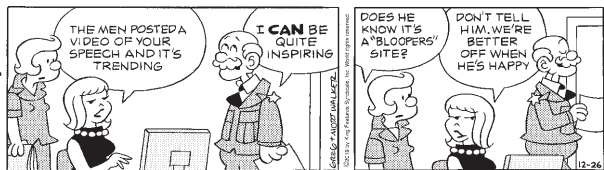
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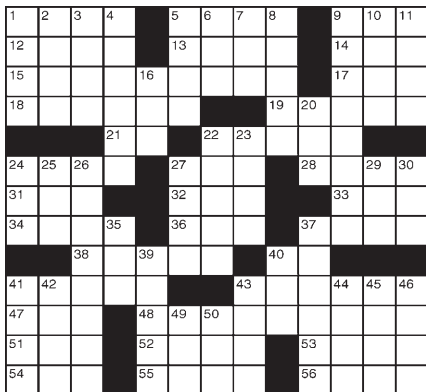
Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

- 1 Advertise
- 5 Knocks
- 9 Hoover's org.
- 12 Hand (out)
- 13 Mosque leader
- 14 Branch
- 15 Sense of humor
- 18 Gazes
- 19 Helps a crook
- 21 Alien, for short
- 22 Wash thoroughly
- 24 Barks
- 27 Greek consonant
- 28 Broadway flop
- 31 — chi
- 32 Chapeau
- 33 Odometer start
- 34 Thaw
- 36 Author Tan
- 37 Related
- 38 Clipper ship poles
- 40 Pacino of "Serpico"
- 41 Temple leader
- 43 Lion packs
- 47 — Dhahi
- 48 Heir to the throne, usually
- 51 Ump
- 52 "— chiel"
- 53 "Young Frankenstein" role

DOWN

- 1 Shareable PC files
- 2 LummoX
- 3 Arm bone
- 4 Literary pronoun
- 5 Steakhouse order
- 6 Latin 101 word
- 7 Skillet
- 8 Slander
- 9 Zuckenberg's company
- 10 Nanny's headache
- 11 Rapsclallions
- 16 Still
- 20 Fella
- 22 Pillow covers
- 23 Mayor's domain
- 24 \$ dispenser
- 25 Singer Carly — Jepsen
- 26 Movie maven
- 27 Excellent, in slang
- 29 Miss Piggy's
- 30 "— voyage!"
- 35 Indent key
- 37 Excuses
- 39 Prepares flour
- 40 Louvre collection
- 41 — avis
- 42 Genesis shepherd
- 43 "Hey!"
- 44 Word of warning
- 45 Thus
- 46 Crisp cookie
- 49 Anger
- 50 Gym unit

Answer to Previous Puzzle



12-26

CRYPTOQUIP

NUOP FWHUOBDT RWTZO OZPR
CGZC YZDRU FUWFTU CW
HZQC CW BSMGC UZYG
WCGUO: DTCOZNSWTUQC
TSMGC.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I'VE GOT A BUDDY WHO ABSOLUTELY LOVES WRITING ON BLACKBOARDS. I THINK HE'S A CHALKAHOLIC.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: F equals P

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OPINION

We are not divine. But we are loved.

By KATE BOWLER
Special to The Washington Post

Last week, deep into the season of Advent, a toddler fell asleep in her own bed. Some time in the night, her chest stopped rising and falling. She died in her sleep. Her frantic parents called paramedics, who rushed their daughter to the hospital, but it was too late. Olive Heiligenthal was declared dead at age 2 and transferred to the coroner's office. A tragedy, but not a failure. At least, not yet.

Within 24 hours, this event would be the center of a national debate — not about how Olive died, but about whether Olive might live again. Her mother, Kalley, asked her hundreds of thousands of Instagram followers for their help. Jesus, she explained, has conquered the grave and holds the keys to resurrection power. Would believers join her in praying that Jesus will raise this little girl from the dead?

The response was immediate. The biggest names in Christian music from around the world chimed in on social media with their support, gathering under the banner of #WakeUpOlive. Kalley Heiligenthal is not simply a mother wrecked by grief; she is a well-known Christian recording artist and a figurehead of a powerful Christian movement that holds that all things are possible. That night, Bethel Church in Redding, Calif., a giant in the Christian music industry, began to hold special worship services dedicated to Olive's resurrection. Musicians celebrated the God of the Impossible with Olive's name scrawled on their hands.

Christians internationally understand themselves as a people of hope. But for many populist Christians, hope is an unstoppable power. That's why it can make poor people rich and sick people well. Hope,

they believe, can bend reality and produce miracles.

This theology is rooted in a century of Pentecostal belief that the Kingdom of God can be seen in everyday miracles, signs and wonders that have come to include anational prosperity, physical health and, every now and again, the ability to declare that some people die "before their time." God can restore them to life.

And so, a countdown to Olive's resurrection began. Family, friends and scores of celebrity influencers posted reminders that each passing day was "a good day for resurrection." By the fourth day, Olive had been in the grave longer than the Savior himself. After a week, Olive's family and her church thanked everyone for their prayers and announced plans for a memorial service.

As a historian of these gospels of signs and wonders, I've known vigils like this before. A friend once had a loved one die so young that he couldn't conceive of it. One day they'd been running down a dirt road talking about their next lacrosse game; the next his parents were choosing a coffin that would keep him in the ground. And so my friends called in his friends to gather around the boy's coffin before his burial and pray. They prayed all night, all day, and then the next, forgetting to eat or sleep, buoyed by a confidence that he would be resurrected.

But as the hours passed in prayer, their families began to descend into fury at the thought who had left him cold. Didn't Jesus bring Lazarus back from the grave? Couldn't God do the same for a well-loved boy?

Now that this heavy supernaturalism is a staple of megachurches, televangelism and the Christian music industry, these tests of hope play out on a global stage. A desperate plea to God to make the impossible universe and the faithful call back with

positive declarations. But as the days wear on, the comment threads are filling with skeptics who watch this spectacle play out with confusion or concern. How do we stop this? What are the limits of hope?

For Christians, all this arrives in a delicate spiritual season. A baby is born, who is somehow God, and he will save the world. But first he will be crucified and leave us, and we will only see glimpses of any evidence that he was here at all. We are asked to live on the cutting edge of hope, mindful that we teeter between delusion and despair.

I have tremendous compassion for those who cry, "Olive, wake up!" For they have done what people of good faith often do when they skip Advent altogether: Advent is the period we celebrate while we wait for God to appear. But we often tire of the anxious wait and decide to pull heaven down to earth ahead of time.

This refusal to admit to the limits of our bodies and our minds transforms hope into an illness. One born of love. We are not divine. When we confuse hope for power, we transform tragedy into failure.

But we can't stop good wishes — will not come true. Bodies age. Love slips out of our hands. A baby girl named Olive will need a funeral. But let's allow ourselves to long for companionship, beauty, friendship and decent parking on cold days. Let us wish that our child would come to dinner, or that we would tuck us in one last time, or that our grandpa would admit that the invention of polyester was a terrible mistake. Hope is the language of May it be.

This Christmas, God will be born among us, despite our best efforts. So, for those growing tired of waiting for heaven, may the season give us room to say: God is here. We are loved. It is enough.

Kate Bowler is associate professor of the history of Christianity at Duke University.

In the age of Trump, it's OK to be (deeply) conflicted

By GARY ABERNATHY
Special to The Washington Post

CONSIDERING the decade of Christianity in the United States, the level of outrage expressed over President Donald Trump's offhand comment that the late Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich., might be "looking up," presumably from hell, is somewhat surprising. Suddenly, at least for a day or two, even the secularists of the Hill HillsBORO, Ohio. The local Republican Party county chairman, Tom Felt, suggested that Dingell was "looking down" from heaven. But the president couldn't resist his little joke, and the resulting anguish it caused Rep. Debbie Dingell, the congresswoman's widow, was entirely understandable.

The won't of course. Not that Trump's lack of contrition will cost him any support. The president's devotees long ago accepted his callousness as a character flaw that is offset by his frontal assault on a corrupt and complacent Washington swamp. The blowback from the pundit class over Trump's musings on the fate of someone's eternal soul would be more meaningful if the same empathy was accorded the president when it is predicted that he will burn in hell. Such insinuations are regularly made, and similar hopes expressed in emails I receive. There are even fine art prints of "Trump's Arrival in Hell" available online

(\$30 unframed), but widespread disgust over such an affront to our president has yet to be observed.

Despite the Bible's observation that the path to heaven is narrow and few will travel it, while the road to hell is wide and many more populated, it is still improper in polite society to suggest that anyone will end up in the wrong place, except when discussing Trump.

Trump's joke about Dingell was shameful, but there is an undeniable double standard in the reactions to that Trump says about his own sins. Trump is unrepentant, even when they are comparably snide.

Trump's insults are quickly condemned by most commentators as rude, crude and disgusting, while the barbs directed against him are usually portrayed as examples of keen wit and deserved retribution.

The president does not shoulder all the blame for our divided nation. We all share responsibility for a low discourse too often based on our intractable political stances. This season of peace and goodwill is another opportunity for everyone on all sides to take stock of our own actions. In that spirit, let us strive for some simple truths, even when they are comparably snide.

First, it's OK for Trump's base to admit that he is too often tactless, and doesn't see the example we would like to see in our president. He should lay off criticizing dead people. You can still support Trump for president and simultaneously acknowledge that sometimes he's a jerk.

Second, it's all right for Trump's critics to admit that impeachment was a purely partisan scavenger hunt, and that what was described as a "clear and present danger" in need of immediate action was hardly that at all, proven even by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's refusal to let the articles of

impeachment leave her grasp.

Third, it's acceptable for Trump supporters to admit that, while impeachment was an overreach, Trump's phone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was not "perfect," and he should have avoided even the appearance of holding up foreign aid for political purposes. It will be a legitimate campaign issue for the Democrats.

Fourth, it's time for the mainstream media to admit that the left is sometimes wrong, and concede that not all "right-wing" commentaries are as ill-mannered, even when we know from the debunked Russian collusion narrative and the mounting evidence that some in the FBI indeed, made mistakes as they conducted their investigation of the Trump campaign in 2016.

For people on all sides, it's all right to conduct a theory of Trump is ill-mannered, and simultaneously give him credit for his positive accomplishments. It's OK to like some of what he does but dislike how he conducts himself.

We can enter the election year of 2020 and admit that neither the left nor the right is always on the right side of the issue. Yes, it's complicated, but it's OK to be conflicted, to see both sides, to climb out of our partisan foxholes and acknowledge the obvious, even when it contradicts our preferred narratives and political prejudices. It's OK to respect each other, to consider other opinions and even to change our minds once in a while.

With that, merry Christmas. Or, if you prefer, happy holidays. I'm good either way.

Gary Abernathy, a contributing columnist for The Washington Post, is a freelance writer and former newspaper editor based in Hillsboro, Ohio.

SANREBOARD/COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Sports on AFN

Go to the American Forces Network website for the most up-to-date TV schedules. myafn.net

Deals

Monday's transactions

BASEBALL
American League
BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Announced major league coach Jose Hernandez moves to assistant hitting coach. Named Fred Gonzalez major league coach; Darren Holmes as bullpen coach and Anthony Sanders first base coach.
HOUSTON ASTROS — Signed C Martin Maldonado to a two-year contract.
KANSAS CITY ROYALS — Traded INF Cristian Pardo to the N.Y. Yankees for RHP Chase Adams.
LOS ANGELES ANGELS — Signed RHP Julio Teheran to a one-year contract.
National League
MIAMI MARLINS — Agreed to terms with C Francisco Cervelli on a one-year contract.
PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Named Glenn Sestito assistant coach.
SAN DIEGO PADRES — Signed RHP Pierce Johnson to a one-year contract.
BASKETBALL
National Basketball Association
WASHINGTON WIZARDS — Signed G Gary Payton II.
FOOTBALL
National Football League
CINCINNATI BENGALS — Claimed LB Sharif Finch off waivers from Tennessee. Placed WR A.J. Green on the IR.
DALLAS COWBOYS — Placed LB Jahari Tavai on IR.
SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS — Signed DL Anthony Zettel to a one-year contract. Waived DL Jeremiah Valogha.
TENNESSEE TITANS — Signed WR Darius Jennings. Signed WR Rashard Davis from the practice squad. Waived LB Nigel Harris and RB Dalvin Dawkins.
National Hockey League
DETROIT RED WINGS — Assigned RW Filip Zadina and C Brian Lashoff and G Calvin Pickard to Grand Rapids (AHL).
LOS ANGELES ANGELES — Recalled F Martin Frk from Ontario (AHL).
Major League Soccer
NEW ENGLAND REVOLUTION — Acquired D Samir Camara via transfer from Le Havre (Ligue 2-France).
ORLANDO CITY — Signed D Rodrigo Schlegel from Racing Club (Primera Division Argentina) via one-year free loan.
MILWAUKEE BRUINS — Signed M Jose Andres Martinez.
MINNESOTA WILDCATS — Announced the retirement of executive chairman Tom Rasmussen effective Dec. 31. Named co-owner Jeff Mallett executive chair.

College football

Bowl schedule
Friday, Dec. 20
Bahamas Bowl
 Nassau
 Buffalo 31, Charlotte 9
Frisco (Texas) Bowl
 Kent State 51, Utah State 41
Saturday, Dec. 21
Celebration Bowl
 At Atlanta
 NC A&T 64, Alcorn State 44
New Mexico Bowl
 Albuquerque
 San Diego State 48, Central Michigan 11
Cure Bowl
 Orlando, Fla.
 Liberty 23, Georgia Southern 16
Raton (Fla.) Bowl
 FAU 52, SMU 28
Camella Bowl
 Montgomery, Ala.
 Arkansas State 34, FIU 26
Las Vegas Bowl
 Washington 38, Boise State 7
New Orleans Bowl
 Appalachian State 31, UAB 17
Monday, Dec. 23
Gasparrilla Bowl
 At Tampa, Fla.
 UCF 48, Marshall 25
Tuesday, Dec. 24
Hawaii Bowl
 Honolulu
 BYU (7-5) vs. Hawaii (9-5)
Thursday, Dec. 26
Independence Bowl
 Shreveport, La.
 Miami (6-4) vs. Louisiana Tech (9-3)
Quick Lane Bowl
 Detroit
 Pittsburgh (7-5) vs. Eastern Michigan (6-6)
Friday, Dec. 27
Military Bowl
 Annapolis, Md.
 North Carolina 50 vs. Temple (8-4)
Pinstripe Bowl
 New York
 Wake Forest (8-4) vs. Michigan State (6-6)
Texas Bowl
 Houston
 Oklahoma State 34 vs. Texas A&M (7-5)
Holiday Bowl
 San Diego
 Iowa (9-3) vs. Southern Cal (8-4)
Cheez-it Bowl
 Phoenix
 Air Force (10-2) vs. Washington State (6-6)
Saturday, Dec. 28
Camping World Bowl
 Orlando, Fla.
 Notre Dame (10-2) vs. Iowa State (7-5)
Cotton Bowl Classic
 Arlington, Texas
 Penn State 30 vs. Memphis (12-1)
Peach Bowl
 Atlanta
 CFM Semifinal, LSU (13-0) vs. Oklahoma (12-1)
Fiesta Bowl
 Glendale, Ariz.
 CFP Semifinal, Ohio State (13-0) vs. Clemson (13-0)
Monday, Dec. 30
SERVPRO Bowl
 Dallas
 Western Kentucky (8-4) vs. Western Michigan (7-5)
Musci City Bowl
 Nashville, Tenn.
 Mississippi State (6-6) vs. Louisville (7-5)

Redbox Bowl
 Santa Clara, Calif.
 Illinois (6-6) vs. California (7-5)
Orange Bowl
 Miami Gardens, Fla.
 Florida (10-2) vs. Virginia (9-4)
Tuesday, Dec. 31
Bell Bowl
 Charlotte, N.C.
 Kentucky (7-5) vs. Virginia Tech (8-4)
Sun Bowl
 El Paso, Texas
 Florida State (6-6) vs. Arizona State (7-5)
Liberty Bowl
 Memphis, Tenn.
 Kansas State (9-3) vs. Navy (9-2)
Arizona Bowl
 Tucson, Ariz.
 Wyoming (7-3) vs. Georgia State (7-5)
Juanito Bowl
 San Antonio
 Texas (7-5) vs. Utah (11-2)
Orange Bowl
 Citrus World, Fla.
 Michigan (9-3) vs. Alabama (10-2)
Minnesota
 Minneapolis (9-3) vs. Auburn (9-3)
Rose Bowl
 Pasadena, Calif.
 Oregon (11-2) vs. Wisconsin (10-3)
Sugar Bowl
 New Orleans
 Georgia (11-2) vs. Baylor (11-2)
Thursday, Dec. 27
Birmingham (ALA) Bowl
 Cincinnati (10-2) vs. Boston College (6-6)
Gator Bowl
 Jacksonville, Fla.
 Indiana (8-4) vs. Tennessee (7-5)
Friday, Jan. 3
Famous Idaho Potato Bowl
 Boise
 Ohio (6-6) vs. Nevada (7-5)
Saturday, Jan. 4
Armed Forces Bowl
 Fort Worth, Texas
 Southern Illinois (9-3) vs. Maine (6-6)
Monday, Jan. 6
LendingTree Bowl
 Mobile, Ala.
 Miami (OHIO) (8-5) vs. Louisiana-Lafayette (10-3)
Monday, Jan. 13
College Football Championship
 New Orleans
 Peach Bowl winner vs. Fiesta Bowl winner
Saturday, Jan. 18
East-West Shrine Classic
 At St. Petersburg, Fla.
 East vs. West
NFLPA College Bowl
 At Pasadena, Calif.
 American vs. National
Saturday, Jan. 25
Senior Bowl
 At Mobile, Ala.
 North vs. South
Sunday, Jan. 26
Hula Bowl
 At Honolulu
 East vs. West

NCAA FCS playoffs

Seminole
Saturday, Dec. 21
 North Dakota State 42, Montana State 14
 James Madison 30, Weber State 14
Championship
 At Toyota Stadium
 At Toyota Stadium
 North Dakota State (15-0) vs. James Madison (14-1)



GARY LANDERS/AP

Dayton guard Rodney Chatman, left, puts up a shot against Grambling State guard by Smith Jr. during the first half of Monday's game in Dayton, Ohio. Chatman finished with 17 points.

Top 25 roundup

Watson, Dayton whip Grambling

Associated Press

DAYTON, Ohio — Ibi Watson's first collegiate start ended with a pair of pressure-packed free throws and a career high in points.

Watson scored 30 points and his No. 18 Dayton recovered from its second loss of the season by beating Grambling State 81-53 on Monday night.

The Flyers (10-2) were missing point guard Jalen Crutcher, who fell and hit his head late in a 78-76 overtime loss to Colorado on Saturday. He was having concussion symptoms, so Dayton shuffled its guard rotation.

Watson made an immediate impact after being introduced as a starter for the first time.

"It was definitely special to be able to go out there and start the game with your brothers," the junior said.

Watson had 15 points in the opening half, three shy of his career high. He scored 10 during a 17-2 run that put the Flyers ahead.

"It shows we have a lot of depth," Watson said. "We have a lot of guys who can score. Without Jalen, we knew we had to step up."

The Tigers (6-7) cut a 20-point deficit to 52-42 midway through

the second half before Rodney Chatman hit a pair of three-pointers and Watson had a four-point play that put the Flyers back in control. Chatman added 17 points.

No. 21 Washington 72, Hawaii 61: At Honolulu, Isaiah Stewart had 26 points and 13 rebounds to lead the Huskies over the Rainbow Warriors in the Diamond Head Classic semifinals.

Quade Green added 11 points and seven assists for Washington (10-2), which will play Houston for the tournament title on Wednesday. Jaden McDaniels had nine points and 13 rebounds, and Nahziah Carter chipped in with 10 points.

Stewart made 13 of 21 shots from the field. He scored 16 points in the first half and finished with his fourth straight double-double.

Hawaii got within six on Zig-mars Raimo's basket in transition with 5:28 to play, but went scoreless for more than three minutes while the Huskies reeled off an eight-point run to stretch their lead to 59-45 with 2:04 remaining.

Justin Webster had 16 points and Raimo added 15 points with 15 rebounds to lead the Rainbow Warriors (6-4), who shot a season-low 28%.

College basketball

AP Men's Top 25

The top 25 teams in The Associated Press men's college basketball poll, with first-place votes in parentheses, records and games played. Based on 25 points for a first-place vote through one point for a 25th-place vote and last week's ranking.

	Record	Pts	Pvs
1. Gonzaga (54)	11-1	1,520	5
2. Ohio St. (9)	11-1	1,450	3
3. Louisville (1)	10-1	1,429	4
4. Duke (1)	10-2	1,388	1
5. Kansas	6	1,382	1
6. Oregon	6	1,382	1
7. Baylor	9	1,207	10
8. Michigan	9	1,189	14
9. Memphis	10	1,040	11
10. Villanova	9	950	18
11. Michigan State	9	928	14
12. Butler	11-1	853	17
13. Texas Tech	9-2	841	13
14. Michigan St.	9	775	15
15. San Diego St.	12-0	763	20
16. Virginia	9-2	718	24
17. Florida St.	10-2	583	19
18. Missouri	8-2	541	13
19. Kentucky	8-3	411	6
20. Penn St.	10-3	322	23
21. Washington	10-2	289	14
22. West Virginia	10-1	229	25
23. Texas Tech	9-2	178	24
24. Arizona	10-3	153	16
25. Iowa	10-2	141	13

Teams receiving votes: Wichita St. 112, Colorado 79, Xavier 68, DePaul 54, Indiana 42, Kentucky 40, St. John's 39, Saint Mary's (Cal.) 29, Marquette 28, Tennessee 23, Creighton 22, Georgetown 21, Georgetown 20, Stanford 7, BYU 4, St. John's 4, Virginia Tech 3, Seton Hall 2,ETSU 1, Wake 1.

Monday's men's scores

EAST
 Siena 73, Canisius 72
SOUTH
 Georgia 73, Georgia Southern 64

MIDWEST

Dayton 81, Grambling St. 53
SOUTHWEST
 SMU 85, Georgia Tech 50
FAR WEST
 San Francisco 85, Portland 69
 Houston 70, Georgia Tech 59
 San Francisco 71, Fresno St. 69
 Utah State 67, Long Beach 57
 Washington 72, Hawaii 61

Men's schedules

THURSDAY
EAST
 E. Kentucky at Marshall
 Hofstra at Princeton
 Widener at Lafayette
 William & Mary at Saint Joseph's
 Maryland at Seton Hall
SOUTH
 Bob Jones at Gardner-Webb
 Florida Memorial at FIU
 Tampa at FAU
 Coastal Carolina at Georgia Southern
 Wofford at Duke
 Mississippi St. at Troy
 Md.-Eastern Shore at Charlotte
 The Citadel at Longwood
 South Carolina at Georgia Southern
 Appalachian St. at South Alabama
 UALR at Louisiana-Monroe
 NC State at Auburn
MIDWEST
 Northwestern at DePaul
 Holy Family College at W. Illinois
 N. Illinois at Chicago St.
WEST
 St. Thomas (TX) at Utah State
 UTEP at Houston
FAR WEST
 Prairie View at Colorado
 Montana St. at CS Bakersfield
 Portland St. at Loyola Marymount
 N. Arizona at UC Riverside
 Utah at Long Beach St.
 Florida A&M at Washington St.
 Jackson St. at Portland

AP Women's Top 25

The top 25 teams in The Associated Press women's college basketball poll, with first-place votes in parentheses, records and games played. Based on 25 points for a first-place vote through one point for a 25th-place vote and last week's ranking.

	Record	Pts	Pvs
1. UConn (9)	10	686	3
2. Oregon St. (5)	11	654	2
3. Oregon St. (4)	11	654	2
4. South Carolina (1)	10	638	4
5. Stanford	10	602	6
6. Louisville	11	562	1
7. UCLA	12	543	8
8. NC State	11	541	9
9. Texas A&M	11	479	10
10. Maryland	9	385	13
11. Kentucky	10	361	14
12. Maryland	10	351	12
13. Mississippi St.	11	327	11
14. Gonzaga	10	277	17
15. DePaul	10	279	16
16. Arizona	11	248	18
17. Texas A&M	11	248	18
18. Virginia	11	248	18
19. Arkansas	11	148	21
20. Mississippi St.	11	108	22
21. Tennessee	9	80	23
22. Michigan	8	52	24
23. Miami	8	52	24
24. Texas	7	40	—

Other receiving votes: Minnesota 39, South Dakota 38, Michigan 38, Rutgers 38, Colorado 8, Northwestern 7, Princeton 7, LSU 5, Arizona St. 4, TCU 4, Kansas 3, Iowa 3, Nebraska 1, Texas Tech 1.

AP Women's Top 25 schedule

Wednesday's games
 No games scheduled
Thursday's games
 No games scheduled
Friday's games
 No games scheduled
Saturday's games
 No. 2 Oregon vs. Corban
 No. 3 Stanford vs. UC Davis
 No. 12 Maryland vs. No. 23 Michigan
 No. 14 Indiana vs. Michigan State

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Shockers quietly on rise as AAC sneaks up

By DAVE SKRETTA
Associated Press

WICHITA, Kan. — It's getting more and more difficult for Wichita State to play the no-respect card this season.

One more week just might be about it. The Shockers, who shot into the national consciousness during their 2013 run to the Final Four, have quietly rebuilt into a team that could challenge Memphis for the American Athletic Conference crown. They have knocked off a pair of Big 12 foes during a four-game winning streak that has allowed them to climb into the first spot just outside the latest Top 25 poll, and it's quite likely they'll finally break through before they head into league play.

Wichita State (10-1) romped past VCU over the weekend. After a brief holiday break, coach Gregg Marshall's team plays Abilene Christian before a New Year's Day matchup with East Carolina to begin the conference grind.

But the game on everybody's radar is the matchup on Jan. 9 with No. 9 Memphis, a game that could help shape the rest of the conference race.

"The beauty of this team is there's a lot of interchangeable pieces. There are so many guys that can help us," said Marshall, shortly after a road win over Oklahoma State. "This was the Tyson Etienne game where he came out and shot well from three. Jamarius Burton and Erik Stevenson were steadfast. They were so good in everything they did. JB with 11 assists



Sue Osores/AP

Wichita State freshman Tyson Etienne, left, has emerged as a dynamic do-everything guard.

and one turnover. I thought those two, especially JB, were the toughest guys on the court."

Being the toughest guys on the court is something that sounds familiar.

When the Shockers were rolling to the Final Four behind Cleanthony Early, they assumed a play-tough mantra that has stuck around for years. It was the same when Fred VanVleet and Ron Baker were leading the Shockers to a perfect regular season the next year, and when Wichita State added two more 30-win seasons over the ensuing two years.

It hasn't really disappeared, either. Nor have the Shockers, even though they may have fallen out of the public spotlight once they switched conferences from the Missouri Valley to the tougher American. Wichita State still went 25-8 and reached the NCAA Tournament its first year in the new league, and went 22-15 with a run to the NIT semifinals last spring. But it wasn't quite the same as when the Shockers had a weekly place in the Top 25.

That might change soon. After landing arguably his best recruiting class at Wichita State, Marshall has a team capable of beating opponents in nearly every way imaginable. Ten players average at least 10 minutes a game, nobody averages more than 13.2 points and a team heavy on underclassmen plays with the selflessness of a bunch that has been around the block.

Stevenson has doubled his offensive output from his freshman season to become the Shockers' leading scorer, and Etienne has emerged as a dynamic do-everything guard as a freshman. Jaime Echenique leads a bunch of bruisers in the paint that come in such waves that it's difficult for opponents to avoid wearing down in the second half.

"What a difference a year makes going into Christmas," Marshall said.

A year ago the Shockers had already lost five of their first 12 games, and they were run out of the gym by VCU in their final game before the holiday. They were also on the bruised side of an 80-48 romp at the hands of Oklahoma.

They were missing leadership. Missing toughness. They were missing depth and scoring and just about everything else.

They found most of those missing pieces late in the season, when they won 11 of their final 14 games to sneak into the NIT field. Then they played well in a series of games that helped to set the table for this season, when Etienne and the rest of the Shockers' freshman class arrived to give them the elements they were missing.

They won their first six games, including a blowout of South Carolina, before falling to West Virginia in a competitive game in the championship matchup of the Cancun Classic.

"The game versus West Virginia taught us all we have to play harder and smarter," said sophomore Jamarius Burton, who had 10 points, eight boards and five assists in the Shockers' recent win over VCU. "Ever since then we've been rolling, just playing harder and smarter and trying to be the tougher team."

After games against Abilene Christian and East Carolina, the Shockers back out of conference play to face Ole Miss in early January. But then comes a visit from Penny Hardaway and the ninth-ranked Tigers, an early showdown between what are turning out to be the class programs of the American Athletic Conference this season.

"This time last year we were just kind of floundering into Christmas, if you will, with our tail between our legs after getting dismantled in Richmond," Marshall said. "And the beautiful thing is we may be just getting started."

Top Scores for Week 16

108 Park Avenue	Europe
105 TARessel	Europe
104 Newsome	Middle East
100 25or6to4	Middle East
99 KILDRIVR	United States
99 Money Main	Middle East
99 Waddle	Europe
97 Crouse	United States
96 MSC_SCO	United States
86 scober75	United States

STARS AND STRIPES

NFL CHALLENGE

HALL OF FAME



Top 10 Overall Scores

1364 gbpack	Europe
1358 PurplePeopleEaters	Pacific
1341 Park Avenue	Europe
1341 KILDRIVR	United States
1337 820th Horseman	Middle East
1335 armydude1212	Pacific
1335 Review16	United States
1329 scober75	United States
1327 gobrownies43	Europe
1327 Jeanfontenot	United States

Week 17 DEADLINE

12 Noon US Central Time, Every Thursday

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COLLEGE FOOTBALL

STEPHEN M. DOWELL
ORLANDO SENTINEL/AP

Marshall quarterback Isaiah Green is hit hard by Central Florida defensive back Antwan Collier during the Gasparilla Bowl on Monday in Tampa, Fla.

Gasparilla Bowl

Gabriel, UCF rip Marshall

By MARK DITTLER
Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Central Florida is best known for a high-powered offense, but the Knights are capable of big plays on defense, too.

Richie Grant and Tre'non Morris-Brash had first-quarter defensive touchdowns, Dillon Gabriel led three third-quarter scoring drives and UCF beat Marshall 48-25 in the Gasparilla Bowl on Monday.

"We finished the season the right way," UCF coach Josh Heupel said. "The turnovers were critical. I thought defensively we started about as fast as you can."

Grant had a 39-yard interception return on Marshall's third play from scrimmage 56 seconds into the game, and Morris-Brash recovered a fumble and ran it 55 yards for a score that helped UCF go up 21-0 with 7 minutes left in the first quarter.

Gabriel threw a 35-yard touchdown pass to Otis Anderson, connected on a 75-yard score with Marlon Williams, and added a 3-yard TD run as UCF went ahead 45-22 with 6:39 remaining in the third.

Gabriel completed 14 of 24 passes for 260 yards as the Knights (10-3) reached 10 or more wins in a school-record third consecutive season. Williams caught seven passes for 132 yards and Greg McCrae had 80 rushing yards on 14 carries.

"We're happy with the 10-3, but at the same time we know what we could have done," Gabriel said.

Isaiah Green went 9-for-23 for 173 yards with a TD and had a rushing touchdown for Marshall (8-5). Brenden Knox, the Conference USA MVP, had 103 yards on 26 carries.

Utah's seniors all in for bowl

Moss, Anae, Fotu returned to finish what they started

By JOHN COON
Associated Press

UTAH stars Zack Moss, Bradlee Anae and Leki Fotu decided to go all in with the Utes when they opted to forego the NFL Draft to return for their senior year. That now includes Utah's bowl game.

Bucking an annual trend where some NFL prospects skip their team's bowl game as they look toward a pro future, Moss, Anae and Fotu are all expected to be on the field when the 12th-ranked Utes (11-2) face Texas (7-5) in the Alamo Bowl in San Antonio on Dec. 31.

"I just wanted to play with my guys," Moss said. "It's one reason I came back, was to play with these guys again and I definitely want us to go ahead and finish it off. I'm healthy enough to go ahead and play so, I mean, that's exactly what I want to do."

The three — all of whom are AP All-American third-team selections — skipped this year's NFL Draft to return for their senior seasons, despite the potential to get taken in the early rounds.

A desire to make a run at a Pac-12 championship drove their decision at that time, a goal the Utes fell short of when they lost to Oregon in the title game. Sending Utah out with a bowl victory is the goal now. The Utes are trying to become the first Pac-12 team to win a bowl game after losing in the conference championship game.

"They're finishing what they started," Utah coach Kyle Whittingham said. "They've been a great group to be around all season long, ever since they got on campus. That's very gratifying and rewarding and speaks to who they are as a group."

Moss returning for his senior season ended up having a ripple effect on Utah's fortunes. He set six school career rushing records during the regular season: rushing yards (4,010), rushing attempts (696), rushing touchdowns (38), total touchdowns (41), 100-yard rushing games (19) and 1,000-yard rushing seasons (3).

Moss is 75 yards away from also becoming the school's career all-purpose yardage leader.

"He's established quite a legacy here," Whittingham said.

Getting Anae and Fotu back offered an equal boost to the defensive side of the ball.

Anae ranked second in sacks (12.5) and tackles for loss (13.5) in the Pac-12 during the regular season. He tied the school's career sack record with 29.5 sacks.

Fotu added 8.5 tackles for loss and a sack while anchoring the



RICK BOWMAN/AP

Utah defensive end Bradlee Anae celebrates after sacking Colorado quarterback Steven Montez on Nov. 30 in Salt Lake City. Anae ranked second in sacks (12.5) and tackles for loss (13.5) in the Pac-12 during the regular season.



RICK BOWMAN/AP

Utah running back Zack Moss was selected to The AP All-Pac 12 Conference team and tied for Pac-12 Offensive Player of the Year with Utah quarterback Tyler Huntley and Oregon tackle Penei Sewell. Moss already owns six Utah records and is 75 yards away from also becoming the school's career all-purpose yardage leader. "He's established quite a legacy here," coach Kyle Whittingham said.

defensive line with Anae.

The standout seniors helped Utah finish the regular season with the nation's No. 1 rushing defense. The Utes have held 10 opponents to fewer than 70 rushing yards this season, the most since the 2006 Michigan Wolverines.

For Moss, there was not any question of coming back one last

time for the Alamo Bowl.

He felt like he owed it to himself and his teammates to finish out the season with them rather than sit out what will be his collegiate finale.

Moss did not play in Utah's 31-20 loss to Northwestern in the Holiday Bowl last season after suffering a season-ending injury

By the numbers

6

Number of career rushing records Zack Moss set during the regular season, including rushing yards and rushing TDs.

29.5

Number of sacks Bradlee Anae has had in his career, tying the Utah record. Anae led the Pac-12 with 12.5 sacks this season.

10

The number of teams Utah held to fewer than 70 rushing yards this season, the most since Michigan in 2006.

SOURCE: Associated Press

a few weeks earlier.

"I get the trend. I do. Not knocking it or anything like that," Moss said. "But if you're healthy enough, then you should go ahead and play with your guys no matter what."

NHL

Roundup

Lightning strike, pound Panthers

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — The Tampa Bay Lightning got off to a good start in a stretch of six consecutive games against division opponents.

Victor Hedman had two goals and an assist, Brayden Point had a four-point game and the Lightning scored three power-play goals in a 6-1 win over the Florida Panthers on Monday night.

Point had a goal and three assists, Nikita Kucherov added a goal and two assists and Alex Killorn and Mikhail Sergachev each scored power-play goals as the Lightning snapped a two-game winless skid.

Andrei Vasilevskiy finished with 29 saves and improved to 15-9-2 on the season.

"These are the teams we're chasing," Lightning head coach Jon Cooper said.

Florida's Sergei Bobrovsky allowed a season-high six goals on 34 shots.

Jonathan Huberdeau scored the only goal for Florida, which had its three-game winning streak halted.

"We got out ... everything tonight," Florida coach Joel Quenneville said. "Whether it was to compete, whether it was possession, whether it was special teams, whether it was ... completed passes. They had it in every category. It was a disappointing way going into the break coming off of three good games and all of a sudden you come up with (Monday's) game. But to give them credit they responded to the urgency that was appropriate."

The Lightning finished off a dominant opening period with a three-goal lead.

"You get that goal on the first shift, it really gets you fired up on the bench," Tampa Bay defenseman Ryan McDonagh said. "That was a great start, something we talked about in trying to get the

lead, play with the lead and keep building on it."

Maple Leafs 8, Hurricanes 6: Mitch Marner scored twice and added an assist in a wild 59-second span midway through the third period, and host Toronto beat Carolina.

Wild 3, Flames 0: Devan Dubnyk recorded his first shutout of the season and Joel Eriksson Ek and Luke Kunin scored as host Minnesota blanked Calgary.

Flyers 5, Rangers 1: Kevin Hayes and Travis Sanheim each scored a pair of goals to lead host Philadelphia over New York for its fourth straight victory.

Blue Jackets 3, Islanders 2: Vladislav Gavrikov scored late in the third period to lift surging Columbus over host New York.

Senators 3, Sabres 1: Jean-Gabriel Pageau scored two goals, leading host Ottawa over Buffalo.

Predators 3, Coyotes 2: Roman Josi had a goal and an assist, Pekka Rinne made 26 saves and host Nashville edged Arizona.

Canadiens 6, Jets 2: Tomas Tatar and Phillip Danault each scored two goals and visiting Montreal won its fourth straight game, beating Winnipeg.

Devils 7, Blackhawks 1: Travis Zajac capped his team's dominant second period with a short-handed goal, and visiting New Jersey pounded Chicago.

Blues 4, Kings 1: Brayden Schenn scored twice in his team's four-goal first period and visiting St. Louis won its sixth straight.

Cucks 4, Oilers 2: Quinn Hughes' power-play goal midway through the third period was the winner as host Vancouver won its third straight game.

Avalanche 7, Golden Knights 3: Pierre-Edouard Bellemare and Nazem Kadri each scored two goals, leading visiting Colorado past Vegas.



WINSLOW TOWNSON/AP

The Bruins' Charlie Coyle scores a short-handed goal on Washington Capitals goaltender Ilya Samsonov during the second period of Monday's game in Boston. The goal gave the Bruins a 5-0 lead.

NHL scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Boston	38	22	7	9	53	130	100
Toronto	38	20	14	4	44	133	122
Montreal	37	18	13	6	42	121	117
Philadelphia	36	18	13	5	41	127	121
Buffalo	38	17	14	7	41	115	119
Tampa Bay	35	18	13	4	40	124	111
Florida	38	16	18	4	36	106	123
Detroit	38	9	26	3	21	82	150
Metropolitan Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Washington	38	26	7	5	57	137	101
N. J. Islanders	38	25	10	3	53	145	96
Philadelphia	37	21	11	5	45	125	101
Pittsburgh	36	21	11	4	46	120	92
Carolina	37	22	13	2	46	124	102
Columbus	37	17	14	6	40	109	128
San Jose	38	21	14	3	45	121	106
New Jersey	36	17	19	5	29	91	126

Western Conference						
	Central Division					
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF
St. Louis	38	24	8	6	54	118
Colorado	37	23	11	3	49	134
Winnipeg	37	21	14	2	44	113
Dallas	38	20	14	4	44	100
Nashville	36	18	12	6	42	116
Minnesota	38	18	15	5	41	118

Western Conference

Central Division							
	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
St. Louis	38	24	8	6	54	118	99
Colorado	37	23	11	3	49	134	103
Winnipeg	37	21	14	2	44	113	107
Dallas	38	20	14	4	44	100	97
Nashville	36	18	12	6	42	126	116
Minnesota	38	18	15	5	41	118	126
Chicago	38	15	17	6	36	105	125
Pacific Division							
Arizona	39	21	14	4	46	112	99
Vegas	40	20	14	6	46	122	118
Edmonton	40	20	16	4	44	117	124
Calgary	39	19	15	5	43	104	116
Vancouver	38	19	15	4	42	124	115
Anaheim	37	15	18	4	34	96	114
San Jose	38	16	20	2	30	101	133

Pacific Division

GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	
Arizona	39	21	14	4	46	112	99
Vegas	40	20	14	6	46	122	118
Edmonton	40	20	16	4	44	117	124
Calgary	39	19	15	5	43	104	116
Vancouver	38	19	15	4	42	124	115
San Jose	39	15	18	8	34	96	114
San Jose	38	16	20	2	34	101	133
N.Y. Islanders	39	15	19	4	34	99	124

Notes: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

Monday's games
 Toronto 8, Carolina 6
 Boston 7, Washington 3
 Columbus 3, N.Y. Islanders 2
 Philadelphia 5, N.Y. Rangers 1
 Tampa Bay 6, Florida 1
 Ottawa 3, Buffalo 1
 Nashville 3, Arizona 2
 New Jersey 7, Chicago 1
 St. Louis 4, Los Angeles 1
 Vancouver 4, Edmonton 0
 Avalanche 7, Golden Knights 3

Tuesday's games
 No games scheduled
Wednesday's games
 No games scheduled
Thursday's games
 No games scheduled
Friday's games
 Boston at Buffalo
 Carolina at N.Y. Rangers
 Toronto at New Jersey
 Columbus at Washington
 Minnesota at Colorado
 Pittsburgh at Nashville
 St. Louis at Winnipeg
 N.Y. Islanders at Chicago
 Calgary at Edmonton
 Vegas at Anaheim
 Los Angeles at San Jose

Calendar

Dec. 19-27 — Holiday roster freeze.
 Dec. 24-26 — Holiday break
 Jan. 1 — Winter Classic, Nashville at Dallas (Cotton Bowl)
 Jan. 26 — All-Star Game, St. Louis.
 April 4 — Regular season ends.



CHRIS O'MEARA/AP

Lightning center Yanni Gourde, right, crashes into Florida Panthers goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky during the second period of Monday's game in Tampa, Fla. The Lightning got six pucks past Bobrovsky.

Bruins start fast, roll past Capitals

By JIMMY GOLEN

Associated Press

BOSTON — The Boston Bruins had one goal taken away by an inadvertent whistle, and the Capitals were about to go on the power play.

Boston's four first-period goals had chased Washington starter Braden Holtby, but no one on the Bruins bench was all that confident Monday night with almost 35 minutes left in the game against a team that had beaten them in 16 of the previous 17 tries.

That's when Brad Marchand forced a turnover at center ice and tipped the puck ahead to Charlie Coyle, who skated in for a short-handed goal to give Boston a 5-0 lead. The Bruins went on to a 7-3 victory that snapped a five-game home losing streak.

"The shorty definitely was big. They had an opportunity to get back in the game," Boston coach Bruce Cassidy said after his team held out despite being outshot 34-6 over the final two periods. "It's been a while since we've been in the winner's circle here."

Brad Marchand and Anders Bjork scored 27 seconds apart in a four-goal first period against Holtby, and Coyle's short-handed goal in the second made it a five-goal lead before Alex Ovechkin put Washington on the board.

Lars Eller cut the deficit to 5-2 with about 4½ minutes left in the third before David Krejci added an empty netter. After Garnet Hathaway caught the Boston defense napping on a would-be icing call with just over two minutes left, Patrice Bergeron scored an empty netter for his second goal of the game and a 7-3 lead.

"We've had a tough time against Washington lately," said David Pasternak, who had a pair of

assists and a roughing penalty for fighting Tom Wilson as the game got chippy in the last half of the third period.

"That's what it takes to beat this team," Pasternak said. "It reminded me a little bit of playoff hockey. Sometimes those games are like that in December."

Tuukka Rask made 39 saves to snap his five-game losing streak and help Boston win for just the second time in its last 10. The Capitals had won eight straight in Boston and 16 of the previous 17 matchups overall.

Krejci had two assists and an empty-netter, and Jake DeBrusk also scored for Boston.

Holtby allowed four goals on 11 shots for Washington, which had won 10 of its previous 12 games. Ilya Samsonov replaced him to start the second period and stopped three of the four shots he faced in almost 38 minutes.

"Obviously, we gave Holtz no chance," Ovechkin said. "We left him alone in the first 10-11-12 minutes, take penalties, made bad plays. ... You can see the last two periods how we played, to have chances to come back. But in the first period we lost the game."

The Metropolitan Division-leading Capitals had won each of the two previous meetings this season, but the Atlantic-leading Bruins owned this one from the start. DeBrusk scored about five minutes in, and then Marchand made it 2-0 at 13:29 on the rebound of Pasternak's shot.

Before the announcement could be completed, Coyle brought the puck out from behind Holtby and Bjork slapped it in to make it 3-0. Bergeron tipped in a shot from Pasternak on a 5-on-3 advantage with a minute left in the period to give Boston a 4-0 lead.

NBA

Simmons' triple-double helps Sixers top Pistons

By DAVE HOGG
Associated Press

DETROIT — Two years ago, the Detroit Pistons and Los Angeles Clippers made a blockbuster trade, with Blake Griffin coming to the Motor City in exchange for Tobias Harris.

Monday, it appeared the long-term winner of the trade has been the Philadelphia 76ers.

Harris outscored Griffin 35-8 and Ben Simmons added a triple-double as the 76ers beat the Pistons 125-109.

"We were able to get our offense rolling, score, get stops and get out in transition," said Harris, who was traded to Philadelphia in February. "We did a good job of just attacking."

Joel Embiid had 20 points and eight rebounds for the 76ers, who improved to 11-4 in their past 15 games. Simmons finished with 16 points, a career-high 17 assists and 13 rebounds.

"I was just sharing the ball, moving with pace and trying to tighten any gaps," he said.

Reserve Furkan Korkmaz added a career-high 21.

"Furkan gave us some good contributions," Sixers coach Brett Brown said. "We had 33 assists and 12 turnovers, which is an incredible ratio — Ben had

17 of those assists — and I especially liked our offensive rebounding."

Andre Drummond scored 27 for the Pistons, who have lost five in a row. Griffin, who had missed the previous two games with knee soreness, scored eight points on 2-for-14 shooting.

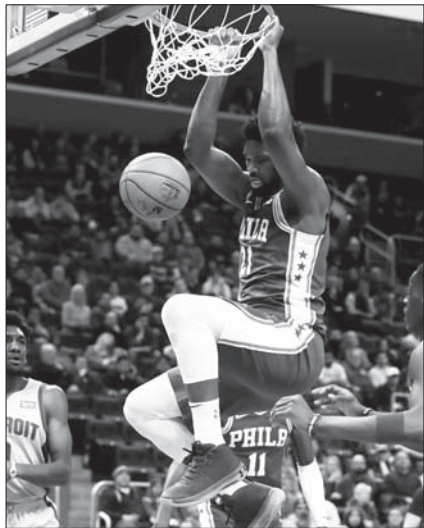
"I've got no excuse," said Griffin, who has also been dealing with flu-like symptoms. "I've just got to be better. I'm used to contributing more and I just haven't been able to do that."

The Pistons rebounded a season-low 59% of Philadelphia's missed shots. Detroit's three lowest defensive-rebound percentages of the season, all under 70%, have come in the last three games.

"We've been looking at it, believe me," Pistons coach Dwane Casey said. "Some of it is just boxing out, but a lot of it is guys coming in from the corners. It's a little bit of everything. Guys are shooting in and we don't have vision of them, and when Andre helps on someone, we have to crack down on him."

Korkmaz had 10 points in the third quarter to help the Sixers build a 10-point lead, but Derrick Rose's layup made it 94-86 going into the fourth.

Philadelphia forced three turnovers in the first four minutes of the fourth quarter and expanded its lead to 103-92.



Carlos Osorio/AP

Philadelphia 76ers center Joel Embiid dunks during the first half of Monday's game against the Pistons in Detroit.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	20	7	.741	—
Philadelphia	12	10	.688	½
Toronto	21	9	.700	½
New York	16	13	.552	5
New York	7	24	.226	15
Southeast Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Miami	12	8	.733	—
Orlando	13	17	.433	9
Charlotte	13	20	.394	10½
Washington	9	20	.310	12½
Atlanta	15	25	.194	16½
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	27	4	.871	—
Indiana	21	10	.677	6
Chicago	12	20	.375	15½
Detroit	11	20	.356	16
Cleveland	9	21	.300	17½

Western Conference

Southwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	21	9	.700	—
Dallas	19	10	.655	1½
San Antonio	17	17	.414	8½
Memphis	14	20	.352	10½
New Orleans	23	25	.258	13½
Northwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Denver	21	8	.724	—
Utah	18	12	.600	3½
Oklahoma City	15	14	.517	6
Portland	14	17	.452	8
Minnesota	10	19	.345	11
Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Lakers	24	6	.800	—
L.A. Clippers	22	10	.688	3
Sacramento	18	18	.500	12
Phoenix	11	19	.367	13
Golden State	7	24	.226	17½

Sunday's games

Toronto 110, Dallas 107
Boston 119, Charlotte 93
Milwaukee 117, Indiana 89
Oklahoma City 118, L.A. Clippers 112
Denver 128, L.A. Lakers 104

Monday's games

Cleveland 123, Atlanta 118
Orlando 103, Chicago 95
Philadelphia 125, Detroit 109
Indiana 120, Toronto 115, OT
Washington 121, New York 115
Miami 107, Utah 104
San Antonio 145, Memphis 115
Denver 113, Phoenix 111
Houston 113, Sacramento 104
New Orleans 102, Portland 94
Golden State 113, Minnesota 104

Tuesday's games

No games scheduled

Wednesday's games

Boston at Toronto

Milwaukee at Philadelphia

Houston at Golden State

L.A. Clippers at L.A. Lakers

New York at Brooklyn

Washington at Detroit

Memphis at Oklahoma City

San Antonio at Dallas

Minnesota at Sacramento

Portland at Utah

Roundup

Pacers hold off Raptors in overtime

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Aaron Holiday likened the back-and-forth test of resiliency against the defending NBA champions to that of a playoff game.

Each time the Indiana Pacers or Toronto Raptors sank a dramatic shot, the intensity level increased that much more, the escalating emotion eventually spilling into overtime.

That's when Holiday hit his two most important attempts, both three-pointers, to help the Pacers snap the Raptors' five-game winning streak with a 120-115 overtime triumph on Monday.

"It's a big win for us," said Holiday, who finished with 19 points in getting the start at point guard for the injured Malcolm Brogdon. "It's fun playing with emotion, especially in big games."

His fourth three-pointer of the game gave the Pacers a 106-113 lead with 2:05 remaining in overtime. His fifth and final three-pointer provided a 119-115 advantage with 54 seconds remaining.

"It just shows the toughness, 48-plus minutes, we're going to be relentless on both ends," said T.Y. Warren, who along with Myles Turner led the Pacers with 24 points apiece. "I'm glad the way we responded, tough shots and we got some key steps at the end."

The Pacers (21-10) set a franchise record with 42 three-point attempts and matched a season high with 18 made. That included four in the fourth quarter and overtime.



DOUG MCSCHOOLER/AP

Indiana Pacers center Myles Turner, left, blocks the shot of Toronto Raptors forward OG Anunoby during Monday's game in Indianapolis.

Heat 107, Jazz 104: Jimmy Butler scored 20 points, Bam Adebayo added 18 points and 12 rebounds and Miami beat Utah

to improve the NBA's best home record to 13-1.

Rockets 113, Kings 104: James Harden scored 34 points,

ruddell Westbrook had 28 and visiting Houston overcame one of its worst fourth quarters of the season to beat Sacramento.

Pelicans 102, Trail Blazers 94: Jrue Holiday scored 21 points, Brandon Ingram had 19 points and 11 rebounds, and visiting New Orleans capitalized on Damian Lillard's shooting struggles to beat Portland.

Spurs 145, Grizzlies 115: LaMarcus Aldridge scored a season-high 40 points, DeMar DeRozan added 26 points and 10 assists, and visiting San Antonio Spurs shot 67% from the field to rout Memphis.

Nuggets 113, Suns 111: Jamal Murray had 28 points, including a tiebreaking jumper with 3.2 seconds left, Nikola Jokic finished with a triple-double and visiting Denver rallied past Phoenix.

Magic 103, Bulls 95: Terrence Ross scored a season-high 26 points to help host Orlando beat Chicago and break a three-game losing streak.

Cavaliers 121, Hawks 118: Collin Sexton scored 25 points, rookie Darius Garland had 21 and host Cleveland held off a late Atlanta comeback.

Wizards 121, Knicks 115: Bradley Beal scored 30 points, Troy Brown Jr. added 26 off the bench and short-handed Washington outlasted host New York.

Warriors 113, Timberwolves 104: D'Angelo Russell scored 30 points, Alec Burks had 25 points and eight assists, and host Golden State beat Minnesota.

NFL

Beast Mode back to help Seahawks

By TIM BOOTH
Associated Press

RENTON, Wash. — The Seattle Seahawks have reunited with Marshawn Lynch.

The bruising running back known as “Beast Mode” signed a contract with the Seahawks on Monday night, his agent confirmed on Twitter.

Seattle is in desperate need of running backs after Chris Carson (hip) and C.J. Prosise (arm) both suffered season-ending injuries in Sunday’s 27-13 loss to Arizona. Coach Pete Carroll said earlier Monday on his radio show that Lynch was flying to Seattle to undergo a physical.

Carroll said reports are that Lynch is in good shape.

Lynch, 33, has not played in more than a year. His last game was Week 6 of last season with the Oakland Raiders before a core injury ended his season.

The best stretch of Lynch’s career came during his six seasons in Seattle. He arrived via trade from Buffalo early in the 2010 season and became the face of a franchise filled with stars during his time. Sometimes difficult to deal with, but almost always productive on the field, Lynch rushed for 6,347 yards and 57 touchdowns in the regular season during his time in Seattle.

Lynch will always be remembered for his touchdown run in the 2010 playoffs against New Orleans that helped establish the “Beast Mode” persona. It was the

top of the long list of highlights with the Seahawks.

“My relationship with him, it was really fun for me for the most part,” Carroll said. “There were some hard times with it because he challenged the system so much. He challenged so many different aspects — the things with the media and all those kinds of things — he was hard on the regular routine of this job in some regards, but he always played and he’d always bring it and I loved the spirit that he’d bring and the toughness he brought. He’s a very charismatic person and player and he affected a lot of people and he affected this program in a big way.”

Ultimately, Seattle needs production and that will be the big question with a 33-year-old running back.

Lynch averaged 4.2 yards per carry and 62.7 yards per game before getting injured last season. The Seahawks would take that kind of production to help make up for the loss of Carson, who finished the year with a career-high 1,230 yards and 4.4 yards per attempt.

Lynch might not be the only reunion for Seattle. Former running back Robert Turbin posted a picture from the Seahawks locker room on social media late Monday. There was no confirmation from the team that Turbin has signed, but he had been in for a workout with the team last week.

Turbin played for Seattle from



Seattle Seahawks running back Marshawn Lynch attempts to elude Dallas Cowboys outside linebacker Sean Lee during a November 2015 game in Arlington, Texas. Lynch is returning to Seattle, where he had the most productive seasons of his career and where the Seahawks could use his help after losing running backs Chris Carson (hip) and C.J. Prosise (arm) for the rest of the season.

2012-14 and was Lynch’s backup.

“Happy to be back home,” Turbin wrote on Instagram.

Lynch visited Seattle’s facility earlier this month but the team said it was simply to see some friends. The team had to report the visit to the league because Lynch has not officially filed retirement papers and could be signed by any team.

Carroll said general manager John Schneider had been in contact with Lynch’s representatives on the off-chance there was a need down the road.

“John is always on the options and in astute fashion he’s been connected with this one just in case for a long enough time that we’ve had some runway for it. He’s had plenty of time to be

working and get ready in case something came up and I’m anxious to see him when we get him here,” Carroll said. “There is a lot of history here that is great history and there was nobody that ever amplified the kind of mentality and toughness we like to play with, so if we get a chance to get the beast back on the field we’ll see how that works out.”

Behind the call

NFL overtime structure deserves to be revisited by league

By BARRY WILNER
Associated Press

Here are two elements of the NFL’s 10-minute overtime that deserve re-examination by the league during the offseason.

Both are exemplified by games on Sunday, when the Giants beat the Redskins 41-35 and the Dolphins downed the Bengals 38-35. The first is the age-old problem of the coin toss determining far too much. The Giants won it, took the kickoff and marched 66 yards in 11 plays, capped by Kaden Smith’s 3-yard touchdown reception from Daniel Jones. Game over — for the fourth time in eight OT games this season.

Should it have been? The NFL believes so because, as the 2017 Super Bowl proves, nothing was changed in the rules to equalize overtime after the Patriots won the championship with an OT drive. The Falcons lost the coin toss and never saw the ball again. Sure, it can be argued that the defense should be able to make

a stop. Well, the Patriots defense in that game — or the Giants D on Sunday — also should have to show it can make a stop.

The rule calling for a team allowing only a field goal on the first possession to get its chance on offense, passed in 2012, helps a bit. But not enough.

Then there’s the reduction of overtime from 15 minutes to 10. That was done in 2017, in part for television, which doesn’t want NFL games lingering too far beyond a 3-hour, 15-minute or so window. It also was done for player safety, which always must be an important consideration.

Miami’s Jason Sanders kicked a 37-yard field goal at the end of the 10 minutes to win it over Cincinnati. Fine and good.

What about the possibility of a team taking the opening kickoff of OT, marching relentlessly downfield, using up the full 10 minutes and kicking a field goal for the winning points? There are enough 10-minute drives (not 15-minute series) during a season to make that an unfair possibility.

Why? Because the team that lost the coin toss never got the ball even though it yielded only a field goal.

The likelihood that anything changes for overtime is slim, and the league will cite all kinds of evidence supporting the status quo. We wonder if fans feel the same way?

Sackman

The Arizona Cardinals have gotten more attention this year than in any since they had Kurt Warner leading them into contention and then to a Super Bowl. Top overall draft choice Kyler Murray has been responsible for that.

The guy who needs more headlines is linebacker Chandler Jones.

After getting four sacks of Russell Wilson in Seattle, he established a single-season franchise record with 19, topping the 17 he had in 2017. Jones now has 60 sacks in 63 career games since joining the Cardinals. He also has 96 for his career.

Jones had six tackles, four sacks, two tackles for loss, two forced fumbles and a career-high six quarterback hits in the win over the Seahawks. He leads the NFL with eight forced fumbles.

“If we had a better record he would be in that conversation for defensive player of the year,” Kingsbury said. “He should be, he’s phenomenal. Anytime it’s a one on one, there’s a good chance he is going to get home. He is a tough matchup for anybody.”

Sitting down

The Ravens, Texans and Bills are in odd positions for this final weekend of the schedule. They all are in the playoffs — Baltimore and Houston have won their divisions. The Ravens are the AFC’s top seed and the Bills are fifth. Houston is the AFC South winner and could sneak up from No. 4 to No. 3 should Kansas City lose at home to the underwhelming Chargers while the Texans take down the Titans.

So all of them could sit key

players, especially those ailing. But that could have a major effect on who gets the final wild card in the conference.

Pittsburgh is at Baltimore, and there is no love lost between the Ravens and Steelers, of course. The Steelers must win to have a shot at that wild card, and while Baltimore has been the NFL’s best team, it won’t have its full repertoire on Sunday as star quarterback Lamar Jackson and running back Mark Ingram will sit. Certainly it would be satisfying to keep an archival from playing in January. At what potential cost, though?

The Texans have a similar situation with the Titans, who will earn that wild-card spot with a victory no matter what the Steelers do. Houston has a slightly hobbled quarterback in Deshaun Watson, for example. Most important is having him healthy for wild-card weekend.

Coaches tend to approach such scenarios in varying manners. There’s no simple answer.

NFL

Scoreboard

American Conference

East						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
y-New England	12	3	0	.800	396	198
x-Buffalo	10	5	0	.667	308	246
N.Y. Jets	6	9	0	.400	263	353
Miami	4	11	0	.267	279	470
South						
y-Houston	10	6	0	.667	364	350
Tennessee	8	7	0	.533	367	317
Indianapolis	7	8	0	.467	341	335
Jacksonville	5	10	0	.333	262	377
North						
y-Baltimore	13	0	0	.867	503	272
Pittsburgh	8	7	0	.533	279	275
Cleveland	6	9	0	.400	312	350
Cincinnati	4	11	0	.267	246	397
West						
y-Kansas City	11	0	0	.733	420	287
Oakland	7	8	0	.467	298	403
Denver	6	8	0	.400	266	301
L.A. Chargers	5	10	0	.333	316	314

National Conference

East						
	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
Philadelphia	8	7	0	.533	351	337
Dallas	7	8	0	.467	387	305
N.Y. Giants	4	11	0	.267	324	417
Washington	3	9	0	.200	250	388
South						
y-New Orleans	12	3	0	.800	416	331
Tampa Bay	7	8	0	.467	436	401
Atlanta	6	9	0	.400	353	377
Carolina	5	9	0	.333	330	428
North						
y-Green Bay	12	3	0	.800	353	293
x-Minnesota	10	5	0	.667	388	282
Chicago	7	8	0	.467	259	279
Detroit	3	11	1	.233	321	400
West						
x-San Francisco	12	3	0	.800	453	289
x-Seattle	11	4	0	.733	384	372
L.A. Rams	8	7	0	.533	363	340
Arizona	5	1	0	.333	337	411

x-clinched playoff spot
y-clinched division
Saturday's games

Houston 23, Tampa Bay 20
New England 24, Buffalo 17
San Francisco 34, L.A. Rams 31
Sunday's games
N.Y. Giants 41, Washington 35, OT
N.Y. Jets 38, Cincinnati 35, OT
New Orleans 38, Tennessee 28
N.Y. Jets 16, Pittsburgh 10
Pittsburgh 11, Cleveland 17
Indianapolis 38, Carolina 6
Atlanta 24, Jacksonville 12
Denver 27, Detroit 17
Arizona 27, Seattle 13
Philadelphia 17, Dallas 9
Kansas City 26, Chicago 3
Monday's games
Green Bay 23, Minnesota 10
Sunday, Dec. 29
Chicago at Minnesota
Atlanta at Tampa Bay
Pittsburgh at New England
Green Bay at Detroit
Cincinnati at Cincinnati
L.A. Chargers at Kansas City
N.Y. Jets at Buffalo
New Orleans at Carolina
Oakland at Denver
Houston at Houston
Washington at Dallas
Indianapolis at Jacksonville
Philadelphia at N.Y. Giants
Pittsburgh at Baltimore
Arizona at L.A. Rams
San Francisco at Seattle

Monday
Packers 23, Vikings 10

Green Bay 3 6 8 6-23
Minnesota 3 7 0 6-10

First quarter
Min—FG Bailey 23, 13:11.
GB—FG Crosby 42, 2:00.
Second quarter
Min—Diggs 21 pass from Cousins (Bailey), 10:00.
GB—FG Crosby 33, 7:00.
Third quarter
GB—Jones 12 run (Allison pass from Rodgers), 10:00.
Fourth quarter
GB—Jones 56 run (Kick failed), 5:51.
A—FG 1:57.

First downs
Total Net Yards
Rushes-yards
Passing-yards
Punt Returns
Kickoff Returns
Interceptions Ret.
Comp-Att-Int
Sacked-Yard Lost
Punts
Penalties-Yards
Time of Possession

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS
RUSHING—Green Bay, D.A. Adams 13-116, J. Lewis 5-65, E. Green 1-6, G. Graham 1-16, Ervin 1-6, Valdes-Scantling 1-6, Lewis 1-2. Minnesota, Abdullah 10-57, D. Johnson 1-12, Smith 2-4, Rudolph 1-7, O. Johnson 1-6, Boone 1-5.

PASSING—Green Bay, Cousins 16-31-1-22, 1-216. Minnesota, Cousins 16-31-1-22, 1-216.

RECEIVING—Green Bay, D.A. Adams 13-116, J. Lewis 5-65, E. Green 1-6, G. Graham 1-16, Ervin 1-6, Valdes-Scantling 1-6, Lewis 1-2. Minnesota, Abdullah 10-57, D. Johnson 1-12, Smith 2-4, Rudolph 1-7, O. Johnson 1-6, Boone 1-5.

MISSSED FIELD GOALS—None.

Cousins struggles as Vikings falter

By BRIAN HALL
Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Asked during the week about Kirk Cousins' wireless mark on Monday nights, Minnesota coach Mike Zimmer told reporters that if his team lost to Green Bay, it might be because of Cousins, who's having a career year in his second season with the Vikings.

This lackluster offensive performance might not have fallen solely on Cousins, but the \$84 million quarterback was unable to pull the offense out of its lethargy against a stifling Packers defense in a 23-10 defeat Monday night.

Cousins completed 16 of 31 passes for 122 yards, one touchdown and an interception for a 58.8 quarterback rating. He fell to 0-9 as a starter in his career on Monday night. Far more relevant than the time of kickoff or the day of the week was that Cousins' two worst games of the season came against the Packers, who clinched the NFC North.

"I'm not going to get into this Kirk Cousins on Monday night thing and all this stuff," Zimmer said after the game. "Offensively, we didn't play as well as we could do. I'll say that, OK. Defensively, we could play the run better. So, there's a lot of things that we need to clean up."

Even at home, where they were 6-0 coming into the game, the Vikings had just 139 yards of offense. Their longest drive was 31 yards, they had seven first downs on 13 possessions, and they were 4-for-15 on third down.

"When you don't convert third downs, go three-and-out, you just don't have that many plays," Cousins said.

Early: Packers' offense comes alive as Vikings' stalls in 2nd half

FROM BACK PAGE

said Smith, the team's top free-agent signing. "My Christmas gift is here already. I'm happy."

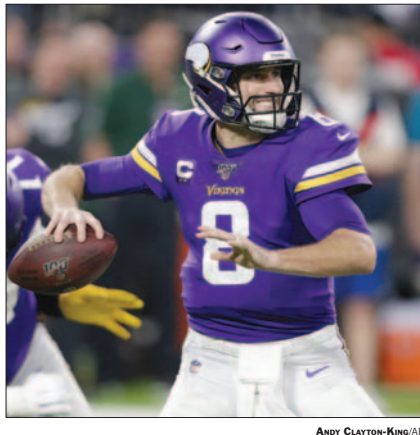
The Packers stormed back from three first-half turnovers, including the rare interception by Rodgers, to silence the deafening crowd and seal the Vikings (10-5) into the sixth playoff seed. The green-and-gold-clad fans in attendance squeezed "Go, Pack, Go!" chants in during the ample down time as the Packers took control in the second half.

Kirk Cousins was sacked five times, with a whopping 3½ by Smith, and he threw an interception in the third quarter that set up the first score by Jones, who leads the league with 16 rushing touchdowns. The Vikings had 139 total yards, as Cousins fell to 0-9 in his career in Monday night games.

"When you don't convert third downs, go three-and-out, you just don't have that many plays. You don't have many bites at the apple to get going," Cousins said. "We certainly did not play well enough from start to finish."

The Vikings had only seven first downs and never netted a drive longer than 31 yards in this concerning regression. They wasted a fine performance by their defense, which has produced 10 turnovers in the last two games.

"Give Green Bay some credit. They did some good things, and that's what happens when you don't play as good as you can," Vikings coach Mike Zimmer said.



ANDY CLAYTON-KING/AP

Minnesota Vikings QB Kirk Cousins attempts a pass during the second half against the Green Bay Packers on Monday night in Minneapolis. Cousins completed just 16 of 31 passes with a touchdown and an interception for a 58.8 quarterback rating.

bits said. "You don't have many bites at the apple to get going. We certainly did not play well enough from start to finish tonight."

They had prime opportunities in the first half, after three takeaways by the defense gave them the ball in Green Bay territory each time.

After Eric Kendricks returned a fumble to the 10-yard line to set up Minnesota's first possession, Mike Boone ran for 5 yards. Then Cousins threw two incompletions

to fullback C.J. Ham, the second thrown too high and hard for Ham to catch as it sailed out of bounds and the Vikings settled for a field goal.

After a rare interception by Aaron Rodgers, Cousins capitalized with a touchdown pass to Stefon Diggs for a 10-3 lead.

"They couldn't play-action pass," Packers defensive tackle Kenny Clark said. "That's their bread and butter. They get easy completions for Kirk Cousins. We

got a chance to get him to drop back on third down so we could do our job."

It wasn't the first time.

Cousins had a season-low 52.9 passer rating in a 21-16 loss at Green Bay earlier this season, including an interception by Kevin King in the end zone with 5:17 remaining when the Vikings had first-and-goal from the 8.

King intercepted a Cousins pass in this game, too, snaring a deep ball intended for Diggs in the third quarter. The Packers then drove 53 yards in eight plays for the go-ahead touchdown.

"Just trying to bring him across the field, and the backside corner sank," Cousins said. "So he made the play. I probably shouldn't have brought him across the field. Either he saw him vertically or progression on."

Under duress all night, sacked five times, Cousins couldn't find many open receivers. Diggs, who has scored in seven consecutive games against Green Bay, had three catches for 57 yards. Adam Thielen was held without a catch on four targets.

The loss locked Minnesota into the sixth seed in the NFC playoffs.

"Certainly the Packers beat us tonight, so we've got to go back and look at how, why and certainly the answers to those questions, in theory, should be of some help going forward, not just if we play them again but in general," Cousins said. "So we'll have to study that, and that will be the silver lining is just learning from the mistakes so they get corrected. Then when games up ahead are being played, they don't repeat themselves."

ings coach Mike Zimmer said.

Minnesota's frustration over a stalled offense that averaged nearly 30 points over the previous 10 games only increased in the second half. Stefon Diggs caught a 28-yard pass on third-and-18 in the third quarter, but Cousins was intercepted later on the drive when Diggs was tangled up with Jaire Alexander and Kevin King made a leaping grab before a 39-yard return.

The Vikings punted on fourth-and-1 from their 45 to white-flag their ensuing possession.

Cousins cost Minnesota the completion of a comeback from a three-touchdown deficit at Green Bay on Sept. 15, when his second interception of the game, also by King, came on an off-balance throw into end-zone coverage on first-and-goal late in the fourth quarter of a 21-16 defeat. Since that fateful first moment of the season, Cousins had played as well as nearly any quarterback in the league to help the Vikings clinch a spot in the playoffs when the Los Angeles Rams lost on Saturday. That was by far the best thing to happen to them this weekend.

"It's pretty frustrating that we lost, regardless if we're in the playoffs or not. You want to win games convincingly," said Diggs, who caught a second-quarter touchdown pass from Cousins three plays after Anthony Harris picked off Rodgers by darting in front of Davante Adams.

Packers defensive coordinator Mike Pettine again schemed awfully well against Cousins and the Vikings, keeping his outside linebackers extra wide to prevent the rollouts and screens that Cousins excels with. Third-string running back Mike Boone, in his first NFL start, led Devin Cook and Alexander Mattison both out with injuries, was mostly bottled up. Cousins was just 4-for-12 for 39 yards in the first half.

"The defense played out of their minds. Za'Dariusz, I don't even know what to say," said Adams, who had 116 yards on 13 catches.

Rough start

With a plus-59 scoring margin in the first quarter entering this game, Rodgers and the Packers have often raced out of the gates this season, hitting their snags later in games. This start was bumpy, though.

Jones fumbled when Anthony Barr wrangled him down on a short catch on the first drive, and Eric Kendricks returned it to the Green Bay 10-yard line. Adams lost a fumble and later dropped a pass in the end zone right before halftime, forcing the Packers to settle for Mason Crosby's third field goal.

Rodgers threw 30 passes in the first half and gained just 158 yards off them. His streak of 27 consecutive attempts without an interception was the longest in the league this season, dating to the Oct. 14 game against Detroit.

SPORTS



Squad goals

Utah seniors put team ahead of NFL Draft » College football, Page 19

NFL

Christmas comes early



ANDY CLAYTON-KING/AP

From left, the Green Bay Packers' Kenny Clark, Za'Darius Smith and Preston Smith celebrate after a sack during the first half against the Minnesota Vikings on Monday night in Minneapolis. The Packers sacked Vikings quarterback Kirk Cousins five times and gave up only 132 yards of total offense in a 23-10 victory.

Packers rely on run game, stifling defense to wrap up 1st NFC North title since 2016

By DAVE CAMPBELL
Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Sporting fresh division-title shirts that few expected them to wear, the Green Bay Packers had the message printed across their chests in the jubilant visitors' locker room: "The North is not enough."

With Aaron Rodgers taking a back seat while the ground game and the pass rush led the way, the Packers became NFC North champions for the first time in three years and deliv-



The Packers' Matt LaFleur became only the 10th rookie head coach to reach 12 victories.

ered Minnesota's first defeat at home this season.

Aaron Jones rushed for 154 yards and two touchdowns, Za'Darius Smith had five tackles for loss to lead a stifling performance by the defense, and the Packers beat the Vikings 23-10 on Monday night.

"There's really nothing like checking that first box on the goal list," said Rodgers, who threw an interception without throwing a TD pass for the first time in 18 games.

The Packers (12-3) made Matt

LaFleur the 10th rookie coach in NFL history to reach 12 victories, winning for the first time in four tries at U.S. Bank Stadium with a dominant finish after trailing 10-9 at halftime. Green Bay stayed in position for a first-round bye in the playoffs, and the top seed — with home-field advantage until the Super Bowl — is still in sight.

"Like I've been telling the guys the last few weeks, the only thing I want for Christmas is a hat and a T-shirt, and they came through with it, man,"

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Inside:

- Cousins falls to 0-9 on Monday night, Page 23
- Seahawks sign Lynch to help fill RB void, Page 22

Sixers' Simmons has triple-double in win » NBA, Page 21

